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MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2010

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COCKTAIL**

PAGE 24

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GRIGIO**
YOU'LL LOVE
**GRÜNER
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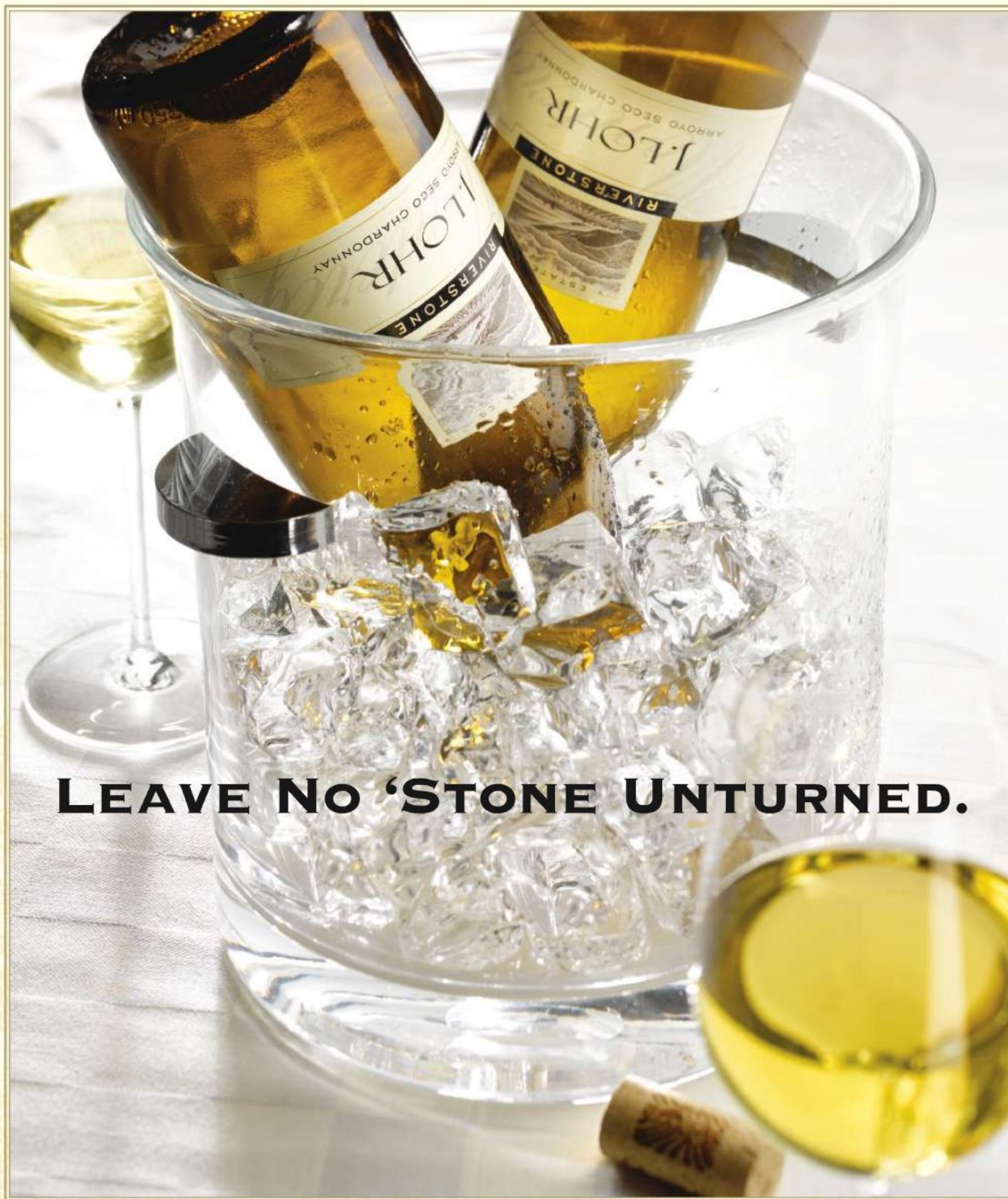
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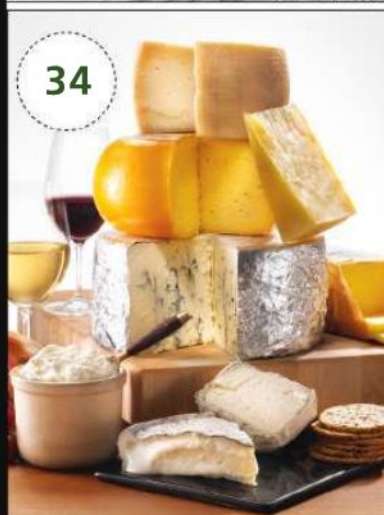
In this era of endless domestic craft beer choices, it's nice to know what you're getting yourself into. A brief guide to the best American beer styles to date.

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PUBLISHER & EDITOR ADAM M. STRUM

WINE ENTHUSIAST MEDIA

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER JAY SPALETA
EXECUTIVE EDITOR SUSAN KOSTRZEWA
MANAGING EDITOR TIM MORIARTY
SENIOR EDITOR/TASTING DIRECTOR JOE CZERWINSKI
ASSISTANT TASTING DIRECTOR LAUREN BUZZEO
ASSOCIATE EDITOR ALEXIS KORMAN
EUROPEAN EDITOR ROGER VOSS
ITALIAN EDITOR MONICA LARNER
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS STEVE HEIMOFF, MICHAEL SCHACHNER, PAUL GREGUTT
CONTRIBUTORS KAREN BERMAN, MARK GOLODETZ, JEAN REILLY
SPIRITS TASTER KARA NEWMAN
WEB EDITOR KATHLEEN MCKENNA
ART DIRECTOR MARCO TURELLI
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR SYLVIA LOPEZ
DIRECTOR OF PRINT PRODUCTION LAURA REEDY
ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER JESSICA TRIPP

EDITORIAL OFFICES

333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549

TEL: 914.345.9463 FAX: 914.218.9186 EDITOR@WINEENTHUSIAST.NET

CALIFORNIA

STEVE HEIMOFF
199 Montecito Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610
TEL: 510.893.7479
sheimoff@wineenthusiast.net

EUROPE

EUROPEAN EDITOR ROGER VOSS
Laclaverie, 32160 Beaumarches, France
TEL/FAX: BORDEAUX 011 33 562 09 50 76
rvoss@wineenthusiast.net

ITALY

ITALIAN EDITOR MONICA LARNER
via della Madonna dei Monti 96, 00184 Rome, Italy
TEL: +39 06 6780627 CELL: +39 333 4634043
mlarner@wineenthusiast.net

SOUTH AMERICA AND SPAIN

MICHAEL SCHACHNER
333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
mschachner@wineenthusiast.net

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

PAUL GREGUTT
c/o Seattle Wine Storage
122 Terry Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109-5207
pgregutt@wineenthusiast.net

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

NORTHEAST U.S. & EUROPE

JAY SPALETA
333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
TEL: 914.345.9463 EXT. 4611 FAX: 866.887.0943
jspaleta@wineenthusiast.net

ADVERTISING SERVICES ASSISTANT

GREG JONES
333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
TEL: 914.345.8463 EXT. 4616 FAX: 866.887.0944
gjones@wineenthusiast.net

SOUTHEAST U.S.

DENISE VALENZA
17846 Mission Oak Drive, Lithia, FL 33547
TEL: 800.315.4397 FAX: 866.896.8786
dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

DENISE VALENZA
17846 Mission Oak Drive, Lithia, FL 33547
TEL: 800.315.4397 FAX: 866.896.8786
dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net

WESTERN U.S.

ALLISON LANGHOFF
401 Ashbury Street, San Francisco, CA 94117
TEL: 800.319.6920 FAX: 800.321.4105
alanghof@wineenthusiast.net

MANAGER OF EVENTS & TRADE SHOWS

JOYCE WHITE
333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
TEL: 914.345.9463 EXT. 4126 FAX: 866.887.0947
jwhite@wineenthusiast.net

CIRCULATION

PROCIRC 3191 Coral Way, Suite 510, Miami, FL 33145

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR JIM MOTRINEC
TEL: 305.441.7155 EXT. 238 FAX: 305.441.7676
jim.motrinec@procirc.com

CIRCULATION ASSISTANT SUSI CHAPMAN
TEL: 305.441.7155 EXT. 235 FAX: 305.441.7676
susi.chapman@procirc.com

RETAILERS: TO CARRY WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE, CALL 800.381.1288 EXT. 6048

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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(INTERNATIONAL: 386.447.2397) wineenthusiast@palmcoastd.com

BACK ISSUES AND ADDITIONAL COPIES: GREG JONES gjones@wineenthusiast.net
REPRINTS: JILL KALETHA 866.879.9144 EXT. 168 jillk@fostereprints.com

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CONTRIBUTORS



Gretchen Roberts ("Summer Ceviche") writes about wine and food for various publications including *Cooking Light*, *Health*, and *MyRecipes.com*. She's a frequent contributor to *Wine Enthusiast's* Pairings column and Web site. When she's not busy tasting wine or writing about it, Gretchen uses her family as guinea pigs for recipes she's testing, grows veggies in her backyard garden and reads British mystery novels on the front porch swing of her 110-year-old house in beautiful eastern Tennessee. More at gretchenroberts.net.



Brian Heard ("Here's to Toast") is a freelance writer and independent educator, spreading wine enthusiasm by "educating" small gatherings one by one. A refugee from the professional kitchen, Brian found a counterintuitive, personal truth: compared to cooking, work as a local truck driver is infinitely more conducive to the pursuit of wine knowledge—reading, writing, thinking and (off-duty) tasting. Brian lives in Kitchener, Ontario (Canada), spitting distance from the vineyards of the Niagara Peninsula. Besides *Wine Enthusiast*, his writing has been featured in *Draft Magazine*, *Canadian Family*, *Colourguides* and *Social Work Today*.



Jeanette Hurt ("Sonoma's Artisan Cheeses") lives in Milwaukee, where she writes about wine and food, especially cheese. Her grandfather grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, but she didn't fall in love with cheese until she spent a season living in Madrid and sojourning in the Loire Valley of France. She is the author of three books on cheese, including *The Cheeses of California: A Culinary Travel Guide*, and she can regularly be heard expounding about dairy delights on the "Good Fermentations" segment of The Lake Effect on WUWM FM. Her latest book (published on June 1st by Alpha Books) is *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Pairing Wine and Food*.



Mike DeSimone and Jeff Jenssen ("Taking On Tequila") are food, wine and travel writers. When not traversing the globe, they divide their time between their homes in New York City and southern Spain. In addition to *Wine Enthusiast*, their articles and photographs have appeared in *Wine Spectator*, *Saveur.com*, *Sherman's Travel*, *International Living* and *The European*. The duo recently hosted a wine tasting for the Washington, DC diplomatic community at the Spanish Ambassador's Residence. They are presenting an ongoing series of food and wine pairings at NYC's City Winery. Hobbies include chasing the harvest wherever grapes are grown, and dinner parties with winemakers.



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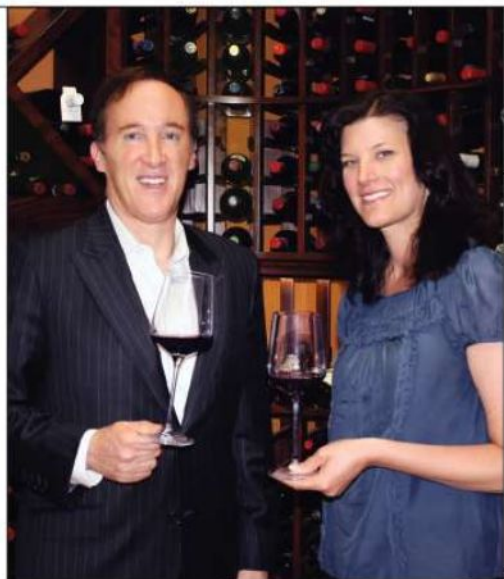
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A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

The wine industry's very foundation is people who are visionaries—the pioneering winemakers of yesterday, the innovators of today and American wine devotees, who are always eager to try something new.

T

he poet Robert Frost famously wrote about the road less traveled—the risky, trailblazing route that may be frightening, but almost inevitably yields exciting and surprising results. Certainly America as a country is all about taking the alternative route, from the very nature of our independence in the 18th century to the proliferation

of railroads and pioneer prospecting to our own modern and proactive approach to technology. The road less traveled, clearly, leads to destinations we could only dream of.

The wine industry is built on people and approaches that are both visionary and alternative. Stories of pioneers, of creative, adventurous thinkers whose own contemporaries thought them certain to fail, lay the foundation of the wine world as we know it today. These are the icons that, whether taking the reins of legacy estates and turning tradition on its head to great results, or immigrating to unknown lands and pitching an uncertain stake in foreign vineyards, are the reason we today enjoy exquisite, varied wines in our glass. The progressive thinking continues today, whether it's in experimentation of organic vineyards, solar powering, environmentally friendly packaging or growing varieties in places previously unknown. The wine industry is ignited by trying new things, and delighted by it.

The wine-drinking consumer is right there with us. More American vinophiles, especially that extraordinary group of adventurers, the Millennials, are embracing the unknown, in fact seeking it. Tearing down the stereotype of the discerning wine drinker as unyielding and tradition-bound, these passionate explorers are reaching for the Grüner, the Txakoli and the Agiorgitiko without batting an eye. The more exotic, the more intriguing, the better. The demand means more diversity on wine lists, in retail stores and in restaurants for all of us, opening up a whole new world of exciting wine and food pairing. Where once the older generation was associated with the classic stylings of a refined Cabernet or delicate Chablis, the new generation is exemplified by the elegant vitality of a crisp Spanish Albariño, or the rock and roll rusticity of a South African Pinotage.

From the very beginning, our own approach at *Wine Enthusiast*

has been about thinking outside of the box. Our lead August feature champions just this sort of approach. On page 28, Jordan Mackay suggests alternatives to six of the most common and most popular varietal wines, running the spectrum from Pinot Grigio to Cabernet Sauvignon. But he doesn't strain too hard to break outside the box every time; that's like the equivalent of the old guy trying desperately to be hip. So if Syrah, not exactly obscure, is a solid stand-in for Cabernet and Malbec for Merlot, so be it.

Also in this issue, Steve Heimoff toured the wine roads of Dry Creek Valley to discover the magic behind the Valley's consistently excellent—and quirky—Zinfandels (page 40). These are the California Zinfandels that exhibit what Steve calls the “briars and brambles” quality so distinct from other regions' Zins.

If your wine-touring plans include Sonoma, Jeanette Hurt has a suggestion for you: break up the winery visits with an occasional visit to a creamery or to the markets that carry the outstanding cheeses of the region (page 34). And on page 46, tour and taste in Jalisco, the state in Mexico where Tequila is the cultural and industrial king.

Which brings us back to the loose theme of this issue. Challenge yourself and motor down the path unknown to you. What you'll discover along the way, whether it's a wine you never knew you loved, a dish that you'll never forget, or a travel destination that becomes your new favorite getaway, will far outweigh the risk of getting there.

Cheers!

Editor & Publisher

Susan Kostrzewa, Executive Editor

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Wine & Spirits

2008 Sauvignon Blanc
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2006 Petit Verdot
Tephra Ridge
Vineyard



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Editor's Choice
2006 Merlot
Tephra Ridge Vineyard



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WINE ENTHUSIAST
2007 Chardonnay
Genevieve Vineyard



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Pictured above is the 7th green bunker complex at the Langtry, "Old Soldier Road" course. A classic short par 4, at 420 yards, this hole demands accuracy.



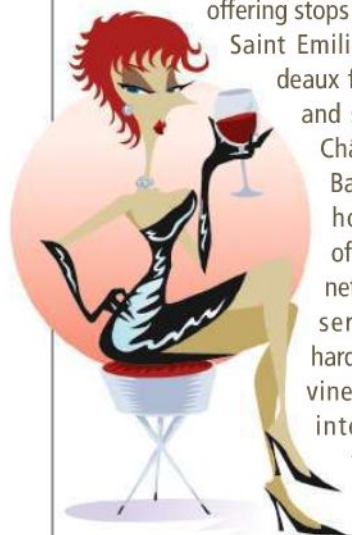
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EXCLUSIVE BORDEAUX WINE TOUR

Ever dream of sipping premium Bordeaux in a private chateau? Now travelers to France can do just that, thanks to Maryland-based travel company French Wine Explorers, whose exclusive Bordeaux Prestige Tour is offered in early summer, 2011 (May 16–21, June 6–11 and June 27–July 2) to a select group of just 12 lucky oenophiles. For \$5,800 per person, guests can stay at the luxurious, four-star Château Pichon Longueville Baron (a registered historic monument built in 1851) in Pauillac, one of the most prestigious—not to mention gorgeous—private wine estates in the Médoc region. The six-day, five-night itinerary is packed with wine-centric experiences to savor, including stops at all five First Growth Château, numerous VIP tasting events, winery tours and five gourmet dinners, several of which feature special guests (including author Dewey Markham Jr., an expert on Bordeaux classification). The Prestige Tour shuttles guests between famous wine estates like Château Haut Brion, Château Margaux and Château Lafite Rothschild in an air-conditioned car,

offering stops in the medieval village of Saint Emilion and the city of Bordeaux for additional sightseeing and shopping. And while the Château Pichon Longueville Baron doesn't have modern hotel-style amenities (it offers no television or internet access and limited room service), guests seem to hardly notice—the Old World vineyard vibe is downright intoxicating. wine-tours-france.com



FLIGHTS OF FANCY

In Zurich, wine lovers experience heaven on earth at Angels' Wine Tower and Bar.

Trapped in airport hell? Layovers in Zurich can feel downright divine—thanks to a 52.5-



foot tall wine tower (and the eight scantily clad “angels” who service it) at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Zurich Airport. Only the third vertical wine tower of its kind (the others are located in Las Vegas and London), this kitschy-cool structure cost nearly four million Swiss francs to build, and holds 4,000 bottles of wine from 14 countries. Of course, the vino plays second fiddle to the white feather-adorned angels, who retrieve bottles of wine for guests via a computer-controlled harness system. Incorporating acrobatic movements, the angels follow a colorful LED-lit flight path toward the bottle to be harvested, securing it in a wine pouch before sailing back to earth. Fetching wine never ruffled so many feathers. (The wine angels can be seen daily, from 11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m. and 5:15 p.m.–11:30 p.m., and perform during lunch and dinner service). radissonblu.com

—ALEXIS KORMAN

ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL DELAPORTE

TOFU TURNS A NEW LEAF

At Hodo Soy in California, soybean is going gourmet.

From an old brick building in a gritty West Oakland neighborhood, the Hodo Soy Beanery is quietly rocking the Bay Area's culinary scene. Chefs at celebrated San Francisco establishments such as Ozumo (ozumo.com), The Slanted Door (slanteddoor.com), Greens (greensrestaurant.com) and Coi (coirestaurant.com), as well as wine country favorite Cyrus (cyrusrestaurant.com), are lining up to buy founder Minh Tsai's products: fresh, savory soy milk, tofu and yuba, a skim from the top of cooling soy milk that Tsai calls "the sashimi of tofu." This is tofu like you've never had before—rich and complex. Hodo also sells ready to eat tofu foodstuffs: five-spice tofu nuggets, sesame yuba strips, spicy braised tofu, soy croquettes, poached yuba loaf.

Tsai started by selling his artisanal tofu at local farmer's markets. Six months ago, he opened Hodo (which means "good bean" in Chinese) "as a touring facility, because I wanted people in an urban environment to see where their food comes from." The company uses only organic, non-genetically modified soybeans sourced from the Midwest.

The production floor looks something like a winery, with gleaming stainless steel machines. Says Tsai, a bit mischievously, "No other tofu producer would ever invite you to visit. It would smell very different." At Hodo, the air is redolent with an earthy, baked-nut scent.

Celebrity chef John Ash, a visitor to the facility, says that tofu "used to be portrayed as a blank canvas," something to stir-fry in a wok to soak up sauces. No more. "Tofu has earned the right to be on the table alongside other great food items," Tsai says. Ash, who's buying yuba "to play with," sounds an ambitious note. "I'm going to try to move tofu out of the Asian [culinary scene] into the Mediterranean area, which could greatly increase its wine-pairing abilities." For more information on Hodo Soy Beanery, go to <http://hodosoy.blogspot.com>. For tofu dish recipes, go to winemag.com/tofu

—STEVE HEIMOFF



PHOTOS JON VAN GORDER

TOP Shelf

Here's a look at this month's top-scoring Cellar Selection, Editors' Choice and Best Buy. For full tasting notes on these and hundreds of other wines, turn to our Buying Guide, which begins on **page 67**.

Cellar Selection

97 Buty 2007 Champoux Vineyard Red (Horse Heaven Hills); \$55. Marvelously fragrant, with seductive scents of cherries, rocks and chocolate, which, along with the astonishing color saturation, suggest a wine of immense power. The 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc blend shows perfect ripeness with flavors of rock and acid preserved. —P.G.



Editors' Choice

96 Rusack 2008 Reserve Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley); \$32. Guaranteed to please the most discriminating Chardonnay fans for its dry crispness, great structure and endless opulence. Massively complex, offering waves of grilled pineapple, pear, buttered toast and smoky vanilla. Only 338 cases produced. —S.H.



Best Buy

92 Pacific Rim 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$11. The newest addition to the Pac Rim lineup is all Yakima Valley fruit, with 2.2% residual sugar and 11.5% alcohol—in other words, the classic Washington tasting room Riesling, only better. Opulent and fruity, with apricots, star anise, mint and a very nice spicy streak that lifts it up and adds a lot of complexity. —P.G.



SHRIMP COCKTAIL WITH HORSERADISH PANNA COTTA AND SPICY TOMATO SYRUP

From Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas, Texas, this refreshing summer bite combines the clean flavor of poached shrimp with horseradish heat and the zing of tomato syrup. According to Chef Bruno Davaillon, “the key is not to overcook the shrimp.” Ingredients can be made a day in advance and assembled when needed. mansiononturtlecreek.com

—LESLEY JACOBS SOLMONSON

For the shrimp cocktail:

1 pound shrimp, 20 count, poached
6 ounces horseradish panna cotta
(see right)
4 ounces spicy tomato syrup (see right)

For the horseradish panna cotta:

3.5 ounces heavy cream
1.5 ounces fresh horseradish
4.5 ounces crème fraîche
1 gelatin sheet
Salt and pepper

For the spicy tomato syrup:

8 ounces tomatoes
¼ ounce garlic cloves
1 ounce olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
1 pinch black pepper mignonette
1 red chili pepper
1.5 ounces sugar
1 ounce red wine vinegar
1 branch basil

For the garnish:

1 ounce lemon zest for garnish
4 ounces mesclun salad
2 ounces croutons
1 ounce verjus vinaigrette
(or oil/vinegar dressing)
Salt and pepper

Poach the shrimp. Set aside. For the horseradish panna cotta, infuse heavy cream, horseradish, salt and pepper in a large pot over low heat. When the flavor has developed, pass through a fine chinoise. Bloom gelatin in cold water. Dissolve gelatin in the horseradish cream; combine with crème fraîche. Reserve. For the tomato syrup, in a *cocotte* (or

casserole dish), make a light caramel with sugar and olive oil; deglaze with the vinegar. Cut tomatoes in half and add to the *cocotte*. Add remaining ingredients and simmer over low heat for 45 minutes. Pass through a fine chinoise and cool. Reserve.

To plate: Set 1.5 ounces of horseradish panna cotta in a bowl, leave to set 1 hour in the refrigerator. Place 1 ounce spicy tomato syrup on top of panna cotta. Dress mesclun salad with verjus vinaigrette, salt and pepper. Place in the center of the bowl. Dress shrimp with verjus vinaigrette, lemon zest, salt and pepper. Place around mesclun. Finish with croutons. *Makes 4 servings.*



Wine Recommendation: The mild shellfish, the rich creaminess of the horseradish, and the heat of the tomato syrup marry well with the minerality of the Domaine Henri Natter Sancerre 2008 from Davaillon's own Loire Valley.



ROSEWOOD MANSION ON TURTLE CREEK, DALLAS

Originally the estate of a Dallas cotton baron, the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek is a Texas institution celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Known for its gracious hospitality and just-like-home (if home were a mansion) appeal, the recently renovated hotel now blends a more modern sensibility with its traditional charm. The Mansion restaurant has always been an integral part of the Dallas dining scene.

As part of the new direction, Chef Bruno Davaillon (right), who hails from the Loire Valley in France, came on board in October 2009. Davaillon brings with him a wealth of experience, having cooked at numerous Michelin-starred restaurants, including La Ligne and Lasserre in Paris, as well as the renowned Tante Claire in London. While Davaillon's background is in classic French cuisine, he is also influenced by elements of regional Texas cooking. Regardless of what he cooks, he emphasizes that “simple is better”, generally using three key ingredients, sourced seasonally. The recipe above is an example of how Davaillon has carefully re-orchestrated the menu to balance the more familiar favorites, like the Mansion's tortilla soup, with classic, but approachable fare. —L.J.S.



BEAT THE HEAT

Summer is a great time for exploring beer gardens around the world.

Munich's most famous beer garden is undoubtedly Hofbräuhaus. Dating back to 1589, this revered venue offers dirndl-wearing servers, plenty of shade from old-growth chestnut trees, sausage plates and, of course, beer. hofbraeuhaus.de

The Marlborough is an outstanding option for outdoor imbibing while in London, featuring barbecue, live bands and quiz night every Tuesday. themarlbroughrichmond.co.uk

The Red Lion Inn sates beer-thirsty customers in the trendy Silverlake area of Los Angeles with plenty of suds, German-style sausages and costumed waitresses on its upstairs-level biergarten. redliontavern.net

The Augustiner Brewery at Mülln in Salzburg was founded by monks in 1621, offers seating for 1,500 visitors, and serves beer in the traditional fashion: from wooden barrels straight to stone mugs. augustinerbier.at

In Australia, visitors can pound back the pilsner at the Newport Arms Hotel, which claims to be



Sydney's largest waterfront beer garden, or at the Bavarian-style Belgian Beer Café Melbourne, offering a variety of seasonal suds and snacks. newportarms.com.au. belgianbeercafemelbourne.com

Opened in 2009, S2 in Queens, N.Y. boasts 30,000 square feet of space, plenty of picnic tables, modern "fire pits" and 19 imported, domestic and craft beers on tap—not to mention gourmet wursts from Schaller & Weber. studiosquarenyc.com

—A.K.

Define Wine Thief: It's not as sinister as it sounds—a wine thief is a hollow tube that resembles a turkey baster (typically fashioned from glass or metal) and is used by winemakers to sample a small amount of vino directly from the barrel during the aging process.



At the Sex and the City II premiere in New York in May, actors Bo Derek and John Corbett pose with Chimney Rock winemaker Elizabeth Vianna, whose wine is featured in the film. chimneyrock.com



We Pick Our Top 10 Wines for \$10 and Under

Once friends and neighbors find out we work at *Wine Enthusiast*, the first question they ask is almost invariably, "So, what's a

great \$10 Pinot Noir?" Although these wines may not be Pinot Noir, they do represent the best of the inexpensive wines we've tasted for this issue, selected for price and quality, and balanced to give a selection of wine styles. Remember, you can always visit our online Buying Guide at winemag.com to search more than 5,000 wines we've named Best Buys in the past.

90 Aveleda 2009 Quinta da Aveleda (Vinho Verde); \$9. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

90 Pacific Rim 2008 Dry Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$10. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

89 Companhia das Quintas 2007 Quinta de Pancas Cabernet Sauvignon (Lisboa); \$10. Imported by Admiral Imports. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

88 Hyatt Vineyards 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

88 Nederburg 2009 The Winemaster's Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Western Cape); \$10. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —S.K.

88 Valentin Bianchi 2009 Sensual Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. Imported by Quintessential Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 El Coto 2009 Rosado (Rioja); \$10. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

87 Hyatt Vineyards 2006 Syrah (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Pine & Post 2007 Merlot (Washington); \$8. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Sierra Cantabria 2008 Codice Tempranillo (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla); \$10. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.



Q&A WITH Gordon Getty, BILLIONAIRE WINERY OWNER, COMPOSER AND POLITICAL KINGMAKER

The longtime Californian riffs on Shakespeare, going green in the vineyard and the easy-going wines he drinks at home.

A lifelong Californian, Gordon Getty, 76, has been out of the oil business for more than two decades (in 1986 he sold his family's Getty Oil to Texaco for more than \$10 billion). Since then, Getty has aided the political careers of prominent Golden State politicians including San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, continuously refined his opus operatic work (*Plump Jack*, based on Shakespeare's *Henry IV part I*), and helped create the Napa Valley wineries PlumpJack and Cade with partners Newsom and John Conover. *Wine Enthusiast* recently met up with Getty during a trip to New York, where over lunch at Landmarc in the Time Warner Center one of America's wealthiest men spoke about his affinity for big wines and music, and his distaste for Pinot Noir.

Wine Enthusiast: When did you first develop a taste for wine?

Gordon Getty: It was in my late 20's/early 30's. Rudy Light, my mother's last husband, loved Bordeaux, and back then it was all about French wine. California was trying to prove itself, and Italy and Australia weren't yet established in the States. So I became a Francophile, which frankly, I still am.

WE: Do you consider yourself a serious wine maven or more of a casual wine drinker?

GG: I consider myself a composer. That's my passion. Even as a businessman, I'm simply a wine enthusiast. I don't drink wine every day or with every meal. But when I do, I want wine with taste. That's why I like the Aussie wines even if some people call them vulgar and over the top. Personally, I think that's the way wine should be. I don't profess to understand Pinot Noir.

WE: As a man of means, do you ever enjoy a simple table wine?

GG: With reds, I admit to being somewhat of a snob. That said, our house wine is Heartland from Australia, which is under \$20. I'm fairly easy to please when it comes to whites. In general, I think *vin ordinaire* is fine if we're talking white wines.

WE: And how about your favorite wines, price be damned?

GG: I'd have to start with our mighty Napa competition: I'm very impressed with Schrader, and of course Harlan is amazing. I also like the Super Tuscans once in a while, especially Masseto. But like with Pinot Noir, I don't get Nebbiolo and Sangiovese.



"WITH REDS, I ADMIT TO BEING
SOMEWHAT OF A SNOB.
THAT SAID, OUR HOUSE WINE
IS HEARTLAND FROM
AUSTRALIA, WHICH IS
UNDER \$20."

WE: Do you travel much throughout the wine world, and if so where is your favorite spot?

GG: We recently went to Bordeaux, where we tasted through the 2009s in barrel. They seem to be great wines in the making. I believe you have to love and respect the competition, and also learn from them.

WE: Switching to your love of music, the field in which you got your Bachelor's degree. Would you ever compose an opera or score around the subject of wine?

GG: No, probably not. Although John Falstaff, a key character in *Henry IV* who called himself Plump Jack, drank sack.

WE: Do you sing as well as compose?

GG: I sing a little basso; I've sung *Plump Jack* when everyone else was sick [laughing].

WE: By now most wine fans know about the PlumpJack winery, which was started in the 90s in Oakville and is part of a bigger business that includes hotels, restaurants and a clothing line. What about Cade, which went commercial with the 2006 vintage?

GG: The name Cade comes from *Henry IV part II*, where Jack Cade said, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers," which isn't such a bad idea today. A cade is also an Elizabethan term for a wine cask, as in 'draw a goblet of claret from the cade.' Cade is on Howell Mountain, where we have 21 acres of vineyards and are making about 15,000 cases of Sauvignon Blanc and red wines. It's the greenest winery in California, with gold LEED certification. It's entirely solar powered; we even

used recycled blue jeans for the insulation.

WE: Who are some people the public might know with whom you have shared your wines?

GG: The White House has served PlumpJack Chardonnay three times in recent years. I had President Obama over to the house before he was elected. I'm not sure we drank wine that day...maybe we did. He's a nice guy; very interesting.

WE: And your relationship with Gavin Newsom, the 42-year-old two-term mayor of San Francisco and now a candidate for lieutenant governor of California; how would you describe that?

GG: The Newsoms are virtually family. I go back to high school with his father, Bill. He's still my closest friend [and the administrator of the Gordon P. Getty Family Trust]. I remain very close with Gavin as well.

—MICHAEL SCHACHNER

STORIED SUDS

Britain's only brewing museum opens its doors in Burton-on-Trent.

When the Coors Brewing Company, now MolsonCoors, purchased the former Bass brewery in the historic English brewing town of Burton-on-Trent, they were unsure of what to do with the on-site Brewing Museum and Brewery Tap pub, so they allowed it to first languish as the Coors Visitors Centre and then, much to the consternation of the British beer faithful, simply shut it down.

The cries of those faithful appear to have been heard, though, and this spring the attraction sprang back to life as the National Brewery Centre, Britain's first and only bona fide brewing museum, run by Planning Solutions, an operator of such tourism destinations as London's renowned wine experience, Vinopolis. Past visitors to the Bass Museum will experience some déjà vu, as when they spy the venerable model in miniature of the city from when it was an international hub of brewing, complete with working railways, but they will likewise notice numerous important changes.

Most apparent will be the absence of the moth-eaten mannequins that formerly appeared in many of the staging areas of the museum, replaced now by actors in period clothing playing the roles of brewer, cooper, shopkeeper and even the 19th century beer baron himself, Michael Thomas Bass. Also in development are such decidedly 21st century innovations as holographic imagery and multi-media presentations.

And for slaking a thirst at the end of your tour, Steve Wellington, head brewery of the craft-style White Shield Brewery, part of the MolsonCoors complex, will be maintaining a steady flow of special, exclusive ales for dispense at the reopened Brewery Tap pub, in addition to the iconic bottle-conditioned ale, Worthington White Shield. nationalbrewerycentre.co.uk

—STEPHEN BEAUMONT



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Colorado's Infinite Theorem Winery proves its slopes are good for more than skis.

Ben Parsons, British-born winemaker-owner of The Infinite Monkey Theorem Winery, has found a new home in Denver. Fruit from the fertile fields of Colorado's Western Slope comprises the bulk of his production, although he's been known to truck raw materials back from California and even Oregon.

Why make urban wine?

"Great wines start in the vineyard," says Parsons, "but they're finished indoors, even if that happens to be a hut in an alley. The best wines come from perfect grapes, wherever they're grown or processed, and I'm happiest in a city."

Why Denver? "Palisade (on the western slope of the Colorado Rockies) relies entirely on tourism, so I decided to vinify in Denver, which has an up-and-coming restaurant community. My young, highly educated clientele also loves the concept of an urban winery producing locally sourced product." The offerings, including Chardonnay, Riesling, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot, were quickly embraced by wine and food professionals, and 90% is now sold via more than a hundred local restaurants and wine stores.

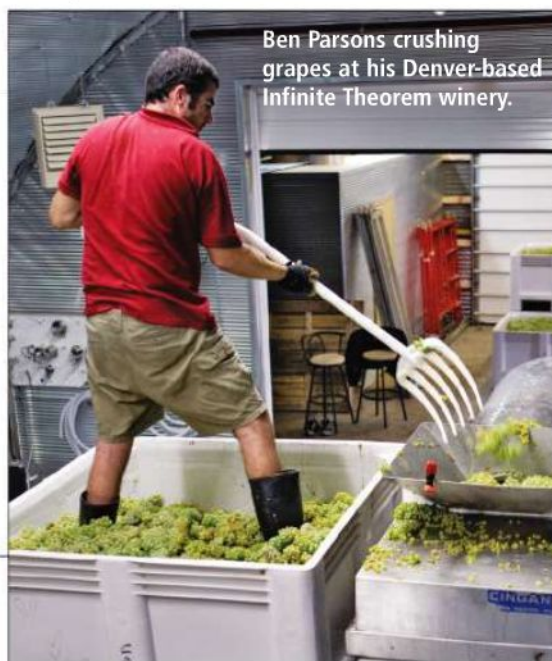
Many of these sommeliers and chefs come to the winery in the fall and work crush with Ben (an oenology graduate of the University of Adelaide in South Australia) so as to feel even closer to the wines they serve. They also benefit from the knowledge Ben has gained at previous stints with Sutcliffe Vineyards and Canyon Wind Cellars in

western Colorado, as well as Selaks Drylands Estate, Marlborough New Zealand and Baileys of Glenrowan, Wangaratta, Victoria, Australia.

"When made well, Colorado wines can compete with the best," Ben says. "But there's still too much inconsistency. Winemakers often blame growers for poor fruit rather than admitting their own faults. Fact is, we have good fruit here, and too much winemaking can only screw it up."

Owning a winery is all about passion. For Ben Parsons, proof of that passion is in the bottle. theinfinite-monkeytheorem.com

—BEN WEINBERG



GEEK | Speak

COATES' LAW OF MATURITY

When recently asked about the ageability of a certain Rioja, Robert Jones (Kysela Père et Fils distributors) stated that he likes "Clive Coates' law of maturity... however long it takes for a wine to get to maturity, it will drink well for that long." In other words, if it took four years for a wine to reach maturity, then it will drink at that level for another four years. Clive Coates, British Master of Wine and author of award-winning *Côte D'or*, did develop his principle while making allowances for personal taste: during the aging of a wine, certain flavors, aromas and textures will appear and then fade—but rather than in unison, these traits each operate on a unique evolutionary path. Coates' law allows for some subjectivity as well—acknowledging that if a trait appealing to certain tasters persists, then the wine will be perceived as aging well to them, while for other tasters who may not value that trait equally, there will be dispute as to the success of the aging.

—CASEY DOOLEY



TO SHELL AND BACK

Discover the joys of lobster beyond the tail.

I have recently joined the Waste Police—waste, as in human beings ripping plants and animals from the wild, only to decide that certain “parts” of those plants and animals are cool to consume. The rest of the food? Typically, relegated to the culinary round file. I will rant soon against the sheer immorality of slaughtering a 700-pound steer to consume a filet mignon, and only a filet mignon, but in this month’s turf and surf of a diatribe, I’m going after those irresponsible diners who believe that 70% of a lobster exists only to carry its tail.

But it’s not just good sense and respect for the ecosystem that I’m preaching here. I never do that unless good taste fits in as well. And when it comes to eating a lobster, not going holistic on that critter leaves you out of all the *best* tastes.

I CONSTANTLY SEE DINERS BEING SERVED WHOLE LOBSTERS WHO GO RIGHT FOR THE TAIL. THEN RIGHT FOR DESSERT. WRONG BY ME! I WOULD NO MORE WATCH *THE GODFATHER* BY FAST-FORWARDING TO PACINO AND THE POLICE CAPTAIN EATING VEAL.

A lobster is not a filet o’ fish, with one neatly sanitized rectangle of protein waiting for your teeth. Aside from the shell—which is wildly available for sucking juices, by the way—there’s only one part of the lobster humans cannot eat: the stomach sac, a dark little pouch located near the head. As to the rest of the *homard*: nature has provided us with a multi-course feast. As long as you’re sacrificing a lobster on the altar of your culinary desires, why not go all the way?

I constantly see diners being served whole lobsters who go right for the tail. Then right for dessert. Wrong by me! I would no more watch *The Godfather* by fast-forwarding to Pacino and the police captain eating veal, and then leaving the rest out.

Consuming a whole lobster is a ritual. And for me,

the incense burning begins with the little legs on either side of the central shell, called the walkers. If a lobster is large—and, given the small secret spots I’m committed to exploring, two pounds or over starts making sense—there’s excellent meat in these “legs.” Just pull ’em off, and run your teeth over the soft shell, pushing the meat into your mouth.

Next stop: more fun with the thorax, sometimes called the lobster’s “chest,” just above the tail. Once you’ve dispatched its little legs, you have a two-sided chamber there, filled with hidden meat. This is the part of the lobster ritual that’s like the crab ritual: you have sweet, gorgeous lumps of crustacean delight hidden inside foreboding cartilage. Get to work! Pull those little cartilage-boxes apart, revealing the nubbins within. You can usually get about six good nubbins from this exercise. I take this thorax part very slowly, dipping the meat in the green-ish tomalley, mixing it with the orange roe (if it’s a female) savoring the natural “sauce” and “garnish.”

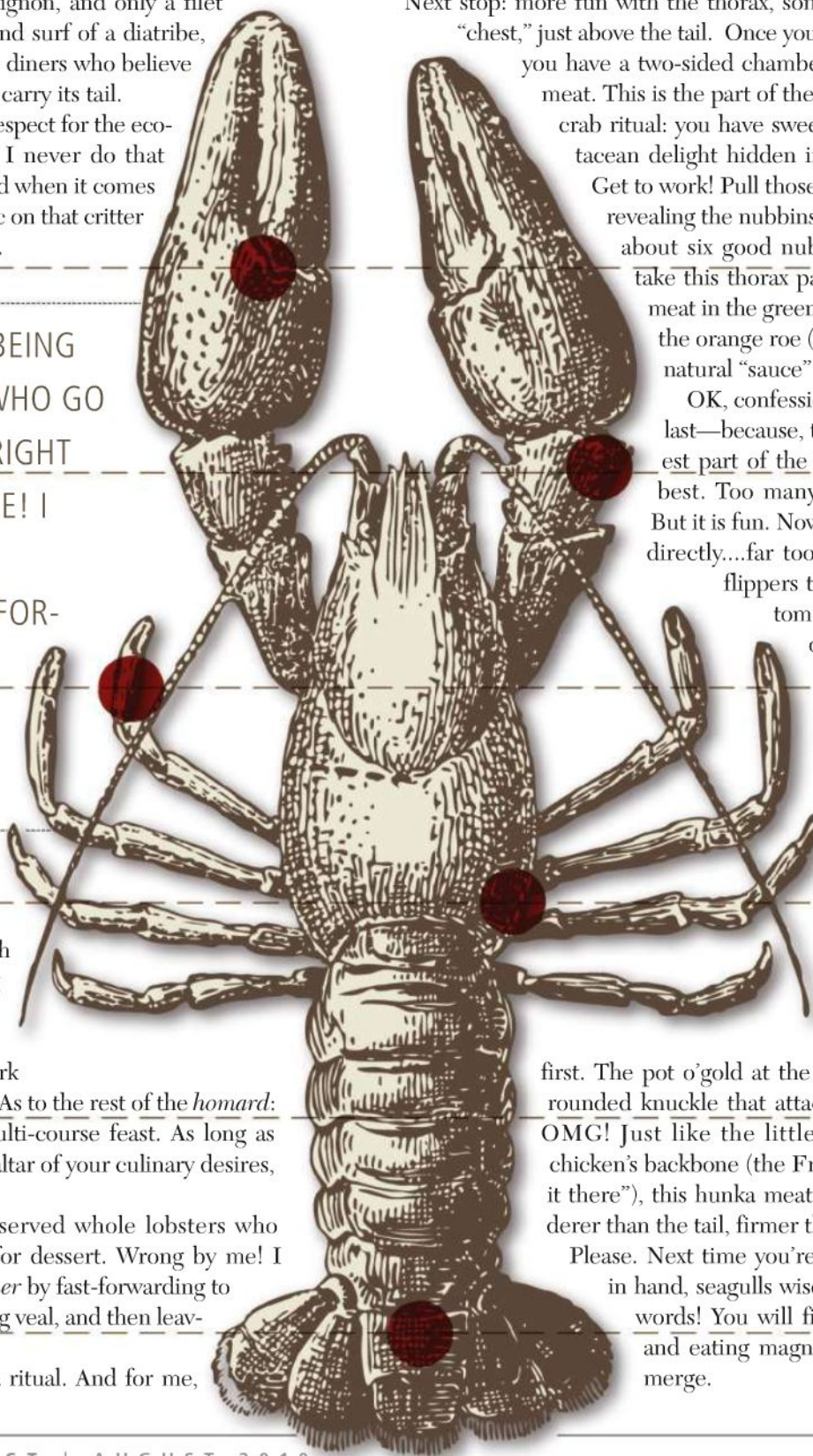
OK, confession. I do not save the tail for last—because, to me, though it’s the meatiest part of the lobster, it’s usually not the best. Too many tough-dry-stringy issues. But it is fun. Now, I would never approach it directly...far too impolite. I start with the

flippers that protrude from the bottom of the tail, ripping each one off and using the teeth-nibble-suction method to extract lovely meat. On to the tail, which I don’t have to explain—other than to say this is the one part of the lobster, for me, that sometimes gets some melted-butter support.

So what is the climax of the crustacean ingestion? The claws. But it’s not the big claw meat I like best, so I approach that

first. The pot o’ gold at the end of the rainbow, is the rounded knuckle that attaches the claw to the body. OMG! Just like the little nugget at the base of a chicken’s backbone (the French call it “the fool leaves it there”), this hunka meat is perfect: juicier and tenderer than the tail, firmer than the claw meat.

Please. Next time you’re sitting on a deck, brewski in hand, seagulls wise-crackin’ above—heed my words! You will find that eating responsibly and eating magnificently are easy things to merge.





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Miami

Not just a haven for party people anymore, wine bars abound in this pulsing Florida hotspot.

The word has long been out about Miami's wild beaches and premier nightlife. But as its wine bar scene is picking up—evolving to tickle the most stringent of palates—the so-called “American capital of Latin America” is on its way to becoming a fantasyland for the wine-minded too. Wine bar hopping is alive and well throughout Miami's neighborhoods, and provides a great way to soak up the unique melding of Latin and Mediterranean cultures. If you are a wine lover with a passion for social atmospheres and beautiful crowds, add this vibrant destination to your list. Miami's energetic spin on wine might just help you discover your inner Latino.

A favorite among locals, **Eno's** (920 Lincoln Road; enos-sobe.com) is a serve-yourself wine bar that offers a laid-back sipping and savoring atmosphere in the heart of the South Beach buzz—a world-famous party scene with trendy hotels, restaurants and nightclubs. The Enomatic preservation systems feature a rotating selection of 64 labels, from the New World to Old, available by the bottle or tastes dispersed with the swipe of a tasting card. Grab a seat on one of the 17th century Venetian-inspired chairs, or sit outside to watch the eclectic crowd of locals and tourists. Small bites at \$15 include caviar, salads and genuine Italian antipasti complemented by the wine. Browse through the tutorials and product fact sheets or have a lively chat with Italian-born owner and sommelier Michele Merlo about what to order next.

Before strolling down the expanding roster of galleries and showrooms in Miami's Design District, swing by the **W Wine Bistro** (3622 NE 2nd Ave; wwinebistro.com), famous for its hip wine list and homemade pastries. The sound, yet eclectic selection includes 2006 Glen Carlou Chardonnay from South Africa, a 2006 Dr. Loosen Riesling from Germany and 200 other labels from around the world. The warm brick-walled atmosphere is enhanced by Parisian owner Marie France, known to greet you at your table and help with pairings.

Set against authentic Cuban cigar factories, fruit stands and cafeteria, **QueBueno! Wine and Gourmet** (6421 SW Eighth Street;

btwflorida.com) is an offbeat wine bar and shop in Little Havana and boasts the best prices in town. The 2,000-bottle inventory ranges from \$700 vintage to inexpensive, obscure offerings from Slovenia. The charming casual ambiance features walls with customer-created graffiti and seating made from casks, barrels and columns of wine cartons. A pour of the *wine du jour* is \$2.50, which could be a sample of an \$8.99 Dragon Seal Cabernet Sauvignon from China or a \$274 Spanish Vega Sicilia. The menu consists of \$3.99 tapas and delicious *pami* sandwiches—French baguettes pressed the Cuban way. Patrons “bring down the house” every evening, when live Latin live music is featured.

Business casual is the dress code at **Novecento** (1414 Brickell Avenue; novecento.com) a landmark Argentine restaurant and scenester hangout in Miami's financial district. Enjoy the elegant outdoor seating among futuristic skyscrapers or the polished wood accents of the lively dining room. Sommelier Paula Costa's monthly wine list brims with a “window of the world” selection; here you'll try Argentine Malbecs from Patagonia to the Northern province of Salta. For a true taste of Buenos Aires, order the Novecento salad with beef; the *lomo*, or the juicy empanadas.

Part social club, part wine shop, **La Bottega Enoteca Sociale** (3540 Main Highway; labottegasociale.com) in Coconut Grove is a favorite among Miami's wine-drinking elite. While it offers a variety of vinos (along with premium charcuterie and cheese plates) in the sleek wood space, a wine club membership (starting at \$200 per month) entitles customers to a wine locker in the private, luxurious stone-walled wine cellar lounge (called La Cava), outfitted with leather sofas and comfy chairs. The membership fee includes invites to exclusive weekly tastings and wine classes. Live jazz can be heard monthly.

Vibrant, evolving and infinitely suitable for both the emerging and the sophisticated vinophile, Miami should be considered as one of America's premium destinations for learning about, and enjoying, great wine.

—JULIANA ACCIOLY



Top to bottom: Miami's thriving downtown glitters at night; the modern dining room at Eno's; a group of wine lovers gather at casual QueBueno! Wine and Gourmet.

PHOTOS TOP: KONDRACHOV VLADIMIR/SHUTTERSTOCK; CENTER: COURTESY ENO

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—KELLY MAGYARICS



BRITISH INVASION

Tea cocktails are the new toast of the spirits world.

High tea meets happy hour with these English-inspired, tea-based tipples—and you don't have to hop the pond to find them.

At newly opened Rabbit in the Moon (New York, N.Y., 212.473.2800), an English lodge-inspired townhouse located in Manhattan's West Village, imbibers can sip Earl Grey tea-infused martinis and snack on shepherd's pie.

At Hatfield's in Los Angeles, Calif., the "Uncle Jerry's Log Cabin" cocktail mixes Earl Grey-infused rye and maple syrup—along with a splash of lemon—to refreshing effect. hatfieldsrestaurant.com

Rum punch gets a restorative twist with the addition of Earl Grey tea at the sleek, marble-topped seafood bar,



Oceana, near Rockefeller Center in New York, N.Y. livanosrestaurantgroup.com

A flavorful blend of red fruit tea, four liquors and a splash of soda form the "LCIT", (short for La Cienega Iced Tea), reviving Angelenos at the upscale Tres

by José Andrés restaurant at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. slshotels.com

The "High Tea" cocktail at Tableau and B Bar inside the Wynn Las Vegas combines the limited-release Absolut Boston vodka (infused with black tea and elderflower) with thinly sliced long English cucumbers and rose nectar (pictured left). wynnlasvegas.com

Partygoers at mur.mur in Atlantic City's Borgata Hotel pep up with the "Oranje Eclipse" cocktail, made with Ketel One Oranje vodka, Jasmin Pearl Blossom green tea, St. Germain liqueur and lemon juice. theborgata.com

Nob Hill diners sip on the "Red Tea Manhattan" at Masa's Restaurant in San Francisco, made with Woodford Reserve Bourbon infused with red vanilla Bourbon tea, Cointreau and chocolate biters. masasrestaurant.com —A.K.

RUSTIC REFINEMENT

Shochu, Japan's popular distilled spirit, makes for a refreshing summer sip.

Much is lost in translation when shochu, Japan's native distilled spirit, is introduced simply as Japanese vodka.

Unlike cheap, mass-produced shochu, honkaku shochu, translated literally as "real shochu," is the traditionally crafted, single-distilled shochu that has exploded in popularity in Japan over the last decade. Vodka is prized for its neutrality, but honkaku shochu puts a bold spotlight on the humblest of raw materials—usually sweet potatoes, barley, buckwheat or rice, but also ingredients like sesame or chestnuts. It's hard to imagine a vodka beloved for its pro-

found potatoey character, but the earthy complexity drawn out from rustic ingredients is exactly what makes premium honkaku shochu so delightful.



Beniotome Goma Shochu (Beniotome Shuzo Co., Ltd., Fukuoka), made from a blend of wheat, rice and sesame seeds, is particularly notable. Goma shochu means "sesame shochu," and although its roasted sesame aroma is prominent, it's also mysteriously smoky and complex. Dry, rich and round with a hint of bitterness, it's delicious neat and refreshing on the rocks. beniotome.co.jp

—ANNA LEE C. IJIMA

Tableside Cocktail Service: Back On the Menu Nationwide

Tableside cocktail service used to exist only in swanky restaurants. Now, even casual watering holes put bartenders behind a rolling cart to customize cocktails.

Sunday brunch-goers at **Aja**, inside Dana Hotel in Chicago, can order a Mimosa or a Bloody Mary from a roving cart. ajachicago.com

The Drawing Room in Chicago pours signature cocktails tableside, incorporating ice cubes created using a horizontal evaporator ice-making system. epassage.com

At **Suite & Tender**, inside Setai San Diego, drinks are made tableside, including Painkiller (a British Virgin Islands favorite) and Grace (Cointreau, Champagne and three berries). suiteandtender.com

Going a step above tableside, bartenders at **Fraiche** (Culver City and Santa Monica) prepare cocktails on tabletops with as much attention as they would in plating a course. fraicherestaurantla.com

Vintage carts are mere accessories in the fabulously restored Art Deco-and-chandelier ambiance at **The Edison** in Los Angeles, tucked into the basement of the city's first private power plant. Handcrafted cocktails are prepared by waitresses using what's stocked on the cart. edisondown town.com —KRISTINE HANSEN

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Proof Positive



COCKTAIL of the Month

HALF-COCKED COCKTAIL

2 ounces Bulleit Bourbon
 ½ ounce strawberry purée
 ¼ ounce fresh orange juice
 1 teaspoon simple syrup
 ¼ ounce Creole Shrub
 orange liqueur
 ½ strawberry (for garnish)
 2–3 grains pink Himalayan
 sea salt

Using a cocktail glass (martini) rinse

the glass with the Creole Shrub
 orange liqueur and set aside.

In a cocktail shaker combine the
 Bourbon, strawberry purée, orange
 juice and simple syrup.

Shake well and strain into the
 prepared glass. Garnish with a thin
 slice of strawberry that has been
 carefully sprinkled with only 2–3
 grains of the sea salt. Float the
 strawberry (salt side up) on top of

the cocktail and serve.

Strawberry Purée recipe:

In a blender combine 1 cup of fresh
 strawberries, 1 ounce of fresh lemon
 juice, 1 tablespoon of granulated
 sugar.

Blend well, taste for sweetness
 and adjust if necessary. Pour into
 clean container. Keep chilled until
 ready to use. Purée will keep for 2–3
 days if refrigerated.



**MIXOLOGIST
 OF THE MONTH**

Lu
 Brow

Bar Chef, Commander's Palace,
 New Orleans

You can't miss Lu Brow at a cocktail event: just look for the bold lipstick and flaming red hair. Known for her expertise with classic and historic cocktails, Brow is a self-described "bar chef" with the Commander's Palace family of restaurants, training staff and building cocktails. Compared to a bartender, who prepares drinks according to recipe, Brow explains, "a 'bar chef' crafts his or her own recipes and prepares fresh juices and mixers." She describes her cocktail approach as "classic" above all.

Brow is a beloved fixture in the New Orleans cocktail scene, which she says has "come a long way in just a few years since Katrina. Cocktail professionals love New Orleans for its history and culture. It's good to see we now value cocktails in the same way we have valued food forever."

Looking forward, Brow anticipates more savory drinks and more kitchen-inspired cocktails, as bartenders "look at food professionals for guidance and invention." She also notes that more wine lovers who might have shunned spirits in the past are now turning a fresh eye toward cocktails.

She advises home bartenders to equip themselves with a "really good" cocktail book, such as those penned by Dale DeGroff, one of Brow's early mentors. "Read it and study it just as you do your cookbooks from the professionals," she says. "Make yourself knowledgeable about bar tools, shakers and strainers. If you take the same care and consideration for your bar at home that you do with your kitchen, you will be a success."

—KARA NEWMAN

PHOTO LEFT JON VAN GORDER



COCKTAILS PERFECT FOR SUMMER ENTERTAINING.

PATRÓN POMEGRANATE

1 oz. Patrón Silver
1/4 oz. Patrón Citrónge
Fresh pomegranate juice
Lemon squeeze

Pour Patrón Silver and Patrón Citrónge over ice. Add fresh pomegranate juice to taste. Finish with a squeeze of lemon. Garnish with an orange twist.

PATRÓN GRAPEFRUIT

1 oz. Patrón Silver
1/4 oz. Patrón Citrónge
Fresh grapefruit juice
Splash of club soda

Pour Patrón Silver and Patrón Citrónge over ice. Add fresh grapefruit juice. Top off with a splash of club soda. Garnish with grapefruit peel and lime.

PATRÓN PINEAPPLE

1 oz. Patrón Silver
1/4 oz. Patrón Citrónge
Fresh pineapple juice
Lime squeeze

Pour Patrón Silver and Patrón Citrónge over ice. Add fresh pineapple juice. Finish with a squeeze of lime. Garnish with a slice of lime.

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THE TICKLISH TOPIC OF TYPICITY

For such an elusive concept, typicity—how faithfully a wine represents its variety—can certainly stir up controversy and affect real winemaking decisions.

P

olitics, religion and sports are conversational stones best left unturned, as we all know, especially in untested company. The wine world has its own ideological lightning rod, especially in Italy. It has sparked polarizing opinions and coarse behavior—from verbal insults to activities ending in criminal charges—among some of the most respected producers, winemakers, journalists and professionals of the grape.

The subject is typicity. The debate surrounding it has to do with whether typicity is an ideal producers should strive for when making wines, and consequently whether wine writers should consider it when scoring those wines.

Working towards a standard definition of typicity in itself presents opportunity for debate. In encyclopedias of wine, the term is used to describe how faithfully a wine reflects varietal origins and characteristics. As far as I know, the word “typicity” (if it is a word) is only used in wine talk. (Though the French and the Italians refer respectively to *typicité* and *tipicità* in broader terms and not just limited to wine.)

Barolo and Barbaresco from Piedmont will show “Nebbiolo typicity”—ethereal tones of tar, licorice, red rose and tobacco—because those wines are 100% expressions of that grape. If a Barolo or Barbaresco presents characteristics not associated with Nebbiolo, that wine could be described as “lacking typicity.”

Jancis Robinson’s *Oxford Companion to Wine* calls it “typicality” and defines it as “a wine’s quality of being typical of its type, geographical provenance, and even its vintage year.”

I believe that generally understood definition is too limiting. The concept should also embrace qualities that make a wine typical of a culture, a people, and, most importantly, a tradition. Typicity in Amarone is achieved thanks to a winemaking technique—that of *appassimento*, whereby grapes are air dried before being pressed into wine. This process is linked to a specific craft found only in the Veneto. In the case of Amarone, typicity is born from tradition.

But what about oak? That is a sore subject among typicity enthusiasts. Winemakers in many regions, like Piedmont and Tuscany, traditionally used big oak containers or casks. Thanks to the diminished surface area of wine against wood, the large containers impart fewer spice and wood-driven aromas, giving more prominence to fruit. But thirty or so years ago, the use of small containers, or *barrique*, gained popularity, giving birth to softer, more plush and concentrated wines.

For hardcore followers of this philosophy, large wood containers

equal typicity while the wines born of *barrique* exhibits none. Ironically, many of the same wine critics who may have awarded a high score to a wine because of its soft, velvety, oak-driven nuances, are now subtracting points from those wines for “lack of typicity.”

At the Barbera Meeting tastings earlier this year in Piedmont, a fight erupted among producers and journalists and insults were exchanged. The journalists’ camp claimed Barbera producers had gone too far in taming the grape’s naturally high acidity (with the use of oak or by harvesting overripe fruit) and had therefore lost sight of typicity. The producers said they were only doing so in order to make the wine more palatable to consumers who don’t like acidic wines. Did the producers sell out? Maybe.

Problems stemming from the ideology of typicity rocked the small town of Montalcino two years ago when it was alleged that some major producers had illegally blended grapes not allowed in the production of Brunello di Montalcino. The local consorzio—the institution charged with safeguarding, enforcing and, until recently, policing typicity—was accused of not doing its job. But everyone knows that those so-called illegal wines have scored well and consumers love them. They may have lacked typicity, but many were excellent.

Italy is at the red hot center of this debate because it has more variables for expressing typicity than any other wine producer on earth. This is due to the country’s vast patrimony of indigenous grapes (more than 700 varieties are used commercially), its varied geography and its reliance on traditional winemaking methods (like *appassimento* and *botte grande*). The French can claim “terroir” as their contribution to the general lexicon of enology, but the Italians truly have *tipicità* nailed down.

As a general policy, reviewers at *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* do not award points for typicity. As our tasting director has expressed: “We should not be rewarding wines for being true to type (exhibiting typicity), but for being extraordinary examples of the type (by definition, atypical).”

As someone who tastes hundreds of Italian wines each month, I cannot help but feel a tinge of excitement when I recognize typicity in my blind flights—the delicate nuances that spark recognition of a vineyard, producer or territory. Some of them display subtle faults or excessive rusticity, but that’s why I like them. More and more wine drinkers are waking up to the concept, and the new dimension of pleasure it can afford. It’s time for industry insiders to make a cool assessment of the concept, so we’re all talking the same language. ■



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The Chianti Wine Consortium www.consorziiovinochianti.it



DRINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

If you like **Cabernet Sauvignon**, you should try **Aglianico**. If you like **Pinot Grigio**, you'll probably enjoy a **Kabinett Riesling**. Presenting satisfying alternatives to your everyday favorites.

BY JORDAN MACKAY

One of the biggest pitfalls of getting older is getting set in our ways, a tendency to retreat to the familiar often at the expense of the adventurous. That's why *CSI* is not only on television 15 times a day, but also why there are always a dozen or so other forensic police procedurals, from *NCIS* to *Bones*. And it seemingly doesn't matter which, but after a hard day of work my wife can vacuously enjoy whatever grisly murder is about to be solved using a tire track and single human hair.

We form similar habits with wine. We relish the bottles we like, often to the exclusion of diversity. One thing that's great about wine, though, is that like television it's genre-oriented. For every popular wine, there are satisfying alternatives—variations just distinctive enough to satisfy your craving for difference. Varietal is the spice of life, right? In that spirit I, with the input of a few sommelier friends (who do this every night), offer some suggestions for those nights when you want to wander a little, but not stray too far from what you know you love.

Pinot Grigio

The most ascendant white in recent years has been Pinot Grigio, a wonderfully light, crisp wine that's refreshing and easy to drink. If you're looking for that high-acid, bright style, there's a few directions to explore. One is German Riesling in the lighter style called Kabinett. "I've never seen anyone unhappy when I offer a glass of Riesling as an apéritif, instead of Pinot Grigio," says Paul Einbund, wine director of San Francisco's hot new restaurant Frances. While its flavors tend toward apricots and not Pinot Grigio's citrus and herbs, Riesling hits many of the same notes—vividly refreshing acidity and lightness. Another option comes from Austria, says Dana Farner, wine director for Wolfgang Puck's steakhouse Cut in Beverly Hills. "People who like Italian Pinot Grigio because it's crisp and light," she says, "are often shocked at how much they love the Grüner Veltliner I offer them." When Farner uses the crisper style of Grüner—federspiel over the richer style called smaragd—the Austrian white hits the mark, she says. "It's light, zingy and has a little bit of refreshing herbal dryness you find in Pinot Grigio." And it works with all the same foods—pasta primavera, olives, fish, spring and summer vegetables, and Asian food.

Sauvignon Blanc

Sauvignon Blanc has been popular for decades, so popular that drinkers are now seeking variations—which can be seen as ironic, given that SB was on the vanguard of the so-called ABC movement a few years ago, when white wine lovers in droves were said to be looking for alternatives to Chardonnay. But the two are not similar; Sauvignon Blanc is marked by bright (sometimes blindingly bright) acidity, which makes it a refreshing apéritif sipper, as well as distinctive "green" flavors of grass, herbs and vegetables. Given that profile, variations are not easy to come by.

One wine I've always thought to be a nice stand-in for Sauvignon Blanc is the Spanish wine Rueda. Made from the Verdejo grape, Ruedas tend to have the same weight and zest of Sauvignon Blanc and some of its fruit characteristics without being as herbaceous and vegetal. If a greenish character is what you're after, however, it would be wise to try Vermentino from Sardinia, which is not "green in the asparagus way, more in the herbal, grassy side," says Einbund. "But it hits the same spot as Sauvignon Blanc, going well with green vegetables and seafood."



90 Johannishof 2008 V. Kabinett Riesling (Rheingau); \$23. A mineral backdrop sets the stage for a powerful expression of apricot and pear fruit. Mouthwatering acidity masks residual sugar, resulting in a lingering finish that seems dry. Imported by Valckenberg International. —W.E.



89 Winzer Krems 2009 Kellermeister Privat Kremser Goldberg Grüner Veltliner (Niederösterreich); \$16. A smooth style of Grüner Veltliner. It floats easily with pear and green plum flavors topped with a serving of cream. Imported by Total Wine & More. —R.V.



87 Agricola Castellana 2009 Azumbre Vinedos Centenarios [Verdejo] (Rueda); \$18. Nice and prickly, with aromas of nettles, citrus and minerals. The palate is fresh and acidic, while the flavors of green apple, scallion, pineapple, lemon and grapefruit come together well. Imported by the Artisan Collection. —M.S.

87 Cantina Santadi 2008 Cala Silente (Vermentino di Sardegna); \$17. Delivers warm and filling aromas of passion and exotic fruits, peach and pear. The wine is smooth and generous in the mouth with balanced acidity. Imported by Empson (USA). —M.L.



Chardonnay

White wines too have intriguing doppelgängers. Sommeliers told me that one of the most frequent requests they hear is for alternatives for Chardonnay. Of course, Chardonnay can take on different forms. There's the Chablis model—lean, tight and mineral; white Burgundy—high acid, citrusy, round, complex, cheesy; and California—rich with pear, cream and toast notes.

When it comes to Chablis, substitutes are easy. Just find wines that go with oysters. The best are Albariño from Spain and Muscadet from the Loire. Neither have the complexity or ageability of high-end Chablis, but both have similarly refreshing acidity, a streak of mineral-ity and can admirably wash down an oyster.

White Burgundy clones are harder to find, but other Loire whites, Savenières and dry Vouvray, can do the trick. Medium bodied with earthy notes and exotic flavors, both wines pair well with white Burgundy's best match—cheese.

And for the richer, woodier style of Chardonnay made famous in California, sommeliers were practically unanimous in picking whites from France's Rhône Valley, particularly Hermitage and Châteauneuf-du-Pape. "They're using quite a bit of oak, so there's a real softness to them," says Cut's Farner. "The fruit characteristic is less apple, more stone fruit, but I feel like a lot of times when people want a really toasty Chardonnay, they're most interested really in the softness, smoothness and oak and white Rhône's always work for them."



88 Condes de Alberei 2008 Sal-neval Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$10. Oceanic aromas and a spritz of lime make the nose just right, and the lively palate of lemon, melon and banana is charged up. Tight on the finish, with citrus and almond skins, and then a lasting impression of pineapple. Imported by CIV/USA. **Best Buy.** —M.S.



88 Laurent Kraft 2008 Sec [Chenin Blanc] (Vouvray); \$18. This is bone-dry Chenin. It does have enough richness to bring a fine balance, with crisp apples, a mineral and steel character, and a taut-as-a-string texture. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports.—R.V.

Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir has become popular in recent years in part because of its versatility—it can go with everything from salmon to steak. With a lighter body, more acidity and bright fruit, this grape makes earthier wines in Burgundy and Oregon, and more fruit-forward versions in California. But this incredible limberness doesn't mean there aren't alternatives. Robert Bohr, a New York-based wine consultant who just stepped down as wine director of Cru, the fine wine mecca in New York City, said his first choice for getting beyond Pinot Noir is from a region not far from Burgundy: Beaujolais. Made from the Gamay grape, "Beaujolais has a lot of the same characteristics as Pinot," he says, "but without the deep tannin structure and with a simpler matrix of fruit flavors. It's also got lovely earthy characteristics and is likewise easy to drink." As for versatility, he says that a lighter Beaujolais—say, a villages or a lighter cru like Fleurie—can work with fish and poultry, while a heavier one—from the village of Morgon, for instance—has enough heft and concentration to be great with pork chops and steaks.

For people who are more into California Pinot Noir, a little bigger and rounder than its Burgundy counterpart, Chris Deegan, whose wine list at San Francisco's Nopa is a fascinating compendium of genre alternatives, often recommends Grenache, which has some of Pinot's light color characteristics, but tends toward higher alcohol and more structure. He also will recommend wines from the rather esoteric Spanish grape Mencia. "I choose wines not from Bierzo (where the wines are most famously from) but from the Ribeira Sacra. The wines are high-toned, earthy and mineral—things you'd want from a good Pinot."



91 Georges Duboeuf 2008 Domaine des Quatres Vents (Fleurie); \$17. Opulent and generous with layers of red fruits. It is the richness allied to a velvet texture that makes it so attractive. Imported by W.J. Deutsch & Sons. —R.V.

90 Cameron Hughes 2007 Lot 129 Garnacha (Campo de Borja); \$15. Inky and floral, with blueberry and wild raspberry flavors. It's smooth, fresh, bold and finishes with mint and chocolate. **Best Buy.** —M.S.



Merlot

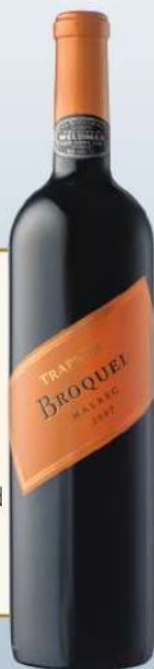
Merlot is Cabernet Sauvignon's compadre on Bordeaux's left bank, softening Cab's structure and tannins to make more approachable wines. Not really seen much on its own in France (on the right bank it's blended with Cab Franc), Merlot became a big hit in California and Washington as a solo variety. Plummy, silky and round, it was the easy-drinking recourse to Cabernet Sauvignon. So how do you come up with alternatives for a grape that was itself an alternative? Easy.

If you started drinking Merlot for its softness, but are ready to venture into something with a little more structure, there's one supreme answer to this dilemma: Malbec from Argentina. A world-beater the last few years, especially in the value end of the price spectrum, Malbec has dark fruit that runs from blackberry and cassis to plums, a hint of minerality and good structure from soft tannins that are more linen to Merlot's satin. Because of those textured tannins, though, Malbec is better than Merlot for grilled meat, which is one reason why it's so successful in Argentina where grass-fed beef is a staple.

Another Merlot alternative, according to Nopa's Deegan, is Tempranillo from Spain, especially modern versions from Rioja and Toro, where, he notes, "the wines have this ripe, dark fruit, really polished tannins and that hint of oaky vanilla that some Merlot drinkers like."



91 Trapiche 2007 Broquel Malbec (Mendoza); \$17. A stacked wine with deep fruit on the nose as well as notes of orange peel and graham cracker. With its lush palate of sweet blackberry and plum flavors, this pours on the stoutness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons. —M.S.



92 Teso La Monja 2007 Almirez [Tempranillo] (Toro); \$22. Expect dark, intense black-fruit aromas and flavors mixed with heat, tannin, cola and spice. Some oak creeps out on the finish. Imported by Fine Estates from Spain. —M.S.

Cabernet Sauvignon

The most popular red wine in the U.S. is Cabernet Sauvignon, a red wine grape that has it all—massive fruit, structure, tannin, natural complexity, ageability, and it even blends well with others. It makes great wine around the world, from Chile to Washington State, though its two major axes are France and California. "If someone wants an alternative to Cab, I usually break it down with them," says Deegan of Nopa. "Do they mean a Cab blend from Bordeaux, which will be more tannic and earthy, or a Cab from California, which will be round, juicy and softer?" If it's an earthier wine they're after, Deegan says, he will take them to Aglianico from Southern Italy. "It's got that same dusty fruit and is also a fairly stout wine with lots of tannins. But it's a little more earthy and has a different structure, with a sort of in-your-face acidity and flatter tannins." For those reasons the great red grape of Campania would pair well with red meat, as Cabernet does, especially less regal cuts like a hanger steak or T-bone.

"The Cabernet alternative I like to champion is Syrah," says Farner of the steakhouse Cut; she specializes in pairing wine with meat. "A lot of people order Cabernet Sauvignon, but they don't want it too dry—and what I take that to mean is that they don't like tannins. So Syrah is a dark, intense red wine like Cabernet, but with fewer tannins." She carries Syrahs from cooler climates like France's Northern Rhône that will taste like smoke, meat and olives, as well as warmer climate versions from Australia with big slushy fruit and black pepper. **MF**



88 Feudi di San Gregorio 2006 Rubrato Aglianico (Campania); \$21. Soft vanilla-like nuances lavished over black fruit, plum cake, spice and cola. The wine is dense and thick with toasted notes and fresh blackberry flavors. Imported by Palm Bay International. **Editor's Choice.** —M.L.

88 Substance 2008 Sy Syrah (Washington); \$15. This shows not only the fruit (raspberry and boysenberry) but also the fragrances (earth, herb) and the nuances (rock, compost) that make these wines so complex and interesting. —P.G.



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The New York Times
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Botanicals In Organic Balance

Artisan Cheeses of Sonoma

Why not round out your wine touring with a visit to a quality-minded creamery?

BY JEANETTE HURT

Sun-drenched days, cool nights and rolling, coastal fog all create the distinctive wine terroirs of Sonoma County.

These same elements also cultivate lush, verdant pastures, where the happy cows, goats and sheep graze. Not only is Sonoma the second largest viticultural area in the state, but it also boasts California's largest concentration of artisan cheesemakers.

"The dairy history here goes way back," says Jacquelyn Buchanan, director of culinary development for Laura Chenel's Chèvre. "Some of the streets are named for dairy families, and some are even named for hay producers."

Here's a look at some of the great cheeses being crafted in Sonoma today. A number of the creameries have shops and a few welcome visitors for tours; we've included the names of nearby wineries so you can better coordinate your Sonoma wine and cheese tour.

Clockwise, from top: Two Rock Valley Goat Cheese; Valley Ford Cheese Co. Fontina; McClelland's Dairy Organic Butter; Laura Chenel's Chèvre Taupiniere and Chèvre Melodie; Délice de la Vallée Cow and Goat Milk Cheese (in crock); Point Reyes Cheese Co. Original Blue; Bellwether Farms Carmody.

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER

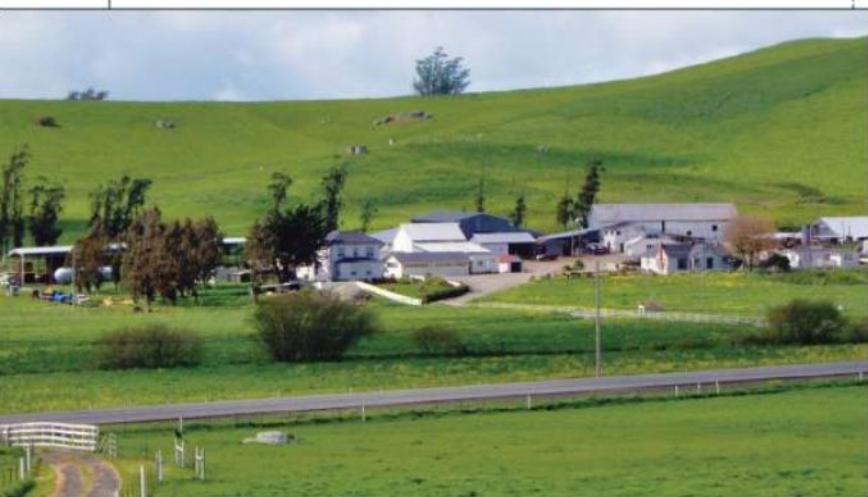




Laura Chenel's Chèvre

Laura Chenel was a pioneer back in 1979 when she decided to make cheese from her goats. Though Chenel sold her creamery in 2006, her 500 goats still produce

milk for the label bearing her name. Most American foodies have sampled her chèvre, but some of the company's best cheeses never leave the area. Try the decadent Taupinière, an aged goat cheese with a bloomy rind and outer layer of ash, and the new Blossoms, chèvre logs filled with Sonoma County bounty like figs and olives. Look for the cheeses at Sonoma Market, Whole Foods, Petaluma Market, Oliver's Markets, Oakville Grocery and Oxbow Cheese Merchant. No visitors. laurachenel.com. **Nearby wineries:** Domaine Carneros, Nicholson Ranch Wineries and Napa's Artesa Vineyards and Winery.



Two Rock Valley Goat Cheese

Two Rock Valley Goat Cheese is one of the county's newest kids on the block, pun intended. This little creamery is so fresh that it doesn't even have a Web site. "Somebody gave my wife some goats, and I said to her 'Bonnie, we can't drink two gallons of milk a day so let's make cheese,'" says Don DeBernardi, owner and cheesemaker. DeBernardi's delectable, aged goat cheese is known throughout the county as Two Rock Valley Goat Cheese, but his new labels call it Canaa, after the Swiss town where his relatives taught him cheesemaking. Visits to the Petaluma farm are free, just call DeBernardi (707.762.6182). **Nearby wineries:** DeBernardi recommends Ferrari Carano, Geyser Peak and Kendall-Jackson.

Vella Cheese Company

Ig Vella was an artisan cheesemaker back before such a term was coined. His creamery, the county's oldest artisan venture, is located in a former brewery in downtown Sonoma, right off the plaza.

Vella, who has made cheese for over seven decades, is easy to spot, as he's the distinguished gent wearing a white paper hat. Though tours aren't given, you can peek into the creamery from the store and see the vats where



Vella's famous Dry Jack is curdled. The Dry Jack, aged for two years and rubbed with olive oil, cocoa and black pepper, is a must-try cheese, but if it's too strong, then sample the Mezzo Seco, halfway between a Monterey Jack and the Dry. vella-cheese.com. **Nearby wineries:** Sebastiani, Roche and Gundlach Bundschu.

Bodega Goat Ranch

Tours—and even cheesemaking classes—are offered at the Bodega Goat Ranch in Bodega. Cheesemaker Patty Karlin offers eco-tours of her sustainable farm and creamery, which includes a cheese tasting and visits with her goats, chickens, ducks and other species in the menagerie. "We're a true farmstead, artisan operation," Karlin says.

While visiting, be sure to taste her Fresco cheese, a goat's milk version of fresh feta; it is one of the closest cousins of real Greek feta in the country, as it is fresher and less salty than the commercial cow's milk versions sold at most grocery stores. Also quite tasty is her Goat Manchego. To sip wine with her cheese, Karlin recommends stopping at a "sweet little wine store with a terrace" in Bodega Bay called Gourmet au Bay. bodegaartisancheese.com. **Nearby wineries:** Cahill Winery, Russian River Vineyards and Lynmar Estate.

ANY SONOMA CHEESE PRIMER WOULD BE REMISS WITHOUT MENTIONING:

Cowgirl Creamery. Enjoy a bevy of bloomy rinds at the original creamery, with a viewing window, café and cheese shop in Tomales Bay. cowgirlcreamery.com

Bohemian Creamery. This new goat and sheep dairy makes great Italian-style cheeses and is one to watch. bohemiancreamery.com

Marin County French. This little factory bested French Brie at the World Cheese Awards. marinfrenchcheese.com

Achadinha Cheese Company. Recently expanded, this farmstead goat creamery makes the intense, aged Capricious. achadinha.com

Redwood Hill Farm and Creamery. One of the country's first chèvre makers also crafts a cider-washed gem called Gravenstein Gold. redwoodhill.com

Bellwether Farms. One of California's first sheep's milk creameries, they also craft Jersey milk cheeses, including the especially swoon-worthy Crescenza. bellwetherfarms.com



ANTAÑO

A RIOJA REVOLUTION
BY J. GARCIA CARRION

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GARCIA CARRION
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McClelland's Dairy

If only happy cows will do, then a must-stop is the McClelland's Dairy in Petaluma. This family dairy makes a luscious, European-style butter, and the family has plans to make a cheese once a new creamery's construction is completed. At the farm's twice-monthly tours, visitors not only get to pet the calves, but they also get to milk a cow by hand. mcclellandsdairy.com. **Nearby wineries:** Keller Estate, Adobe Road and Sonoma Valley Port Works.



Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese

Happy cows can also be found in Point Reyes Station in nearby Marin. The only blue cheese producer in the state, Point Reyes just opened its new education center this spring. Called The Fork at Point Reyes, the school offers culinary

and cheese classes featuring Point Reyes Blue and the new, buttery Toma. pointreyescheese.com. **Nearby wineries:** Many within an hour's drive, including Schug, Kastania and Viansa.

Valley Ford Cheese Company

Karen Bianchi-Moreda's great-grandparents immigrated to California from the Italian region of Switzerland in the late 1800s, and they started a small dairy farm. Today, Bianchi-Moreda works in the dairy with her sons Joe and Jim, and just two years ago, she began to make cheese. "Like everyone else, I just kind of played with the



cheese, and then, this one consistently worked, and I liked it," Bianchi-Moreda says.

That cheese, Estero Gold, has Sonoma chefs' hearts all aflutter because of its rich, Asiago-like taste. At this time, her family farm in Valley Ford is too small for visitors, but you can meet Bianchi-Moreda and her sons at local farmer's markets including Petaluma, Cotati and Healdsburg. valleyfordcheese.com. **Her cheese is featured at the Cyrus Restaurant and several wineries, including Kendall-Jackson, DeLoach, Quintessa and Korbel.**

Bleating Heart Cheese Company

Seana Doughty is California's newest crafter of sheep's milk cheese—there are only five in the whole state. She's a native of Southern California who first fell in love with cheese, then swooned over sheep, and now combines both passions with a comedic fervor. "If you would have told me a few years ago that I'd be the owner of 690 sheep, I would have thought you were on crack," Doughty says. Her first cheese, Fat Bottomed Girl, is sort of like a mix between a young Pecorino and a Brebis.

Doughty can be found each week at the Healdsburg Farmer's Market, where you can pick up a picnic lunch to enjoy on your winery tours. bleatingheart.com. **Nearby wineries:** Seghesio, Hawkes and Forchini.



The Epicurean Connection

Cheesemaking is so addictive that local chefs are getting into the action. Chef Sheana Davis loved Sonoma County cheeses so much (she annually organizes the Sonoma Cheese Conference) that she began making her own, Délice de la Vallée, a fresh, triple cream blending cow's and goat's milks. She and her cheese can be found at her café/store, The Epicurean Connection in Sonoma. sheanadavis.com. **Nearby wineries:** Spann Winery (seriously nearby; above the store), Hanzell (across street) and Highway 12 (less than a mile). **W**

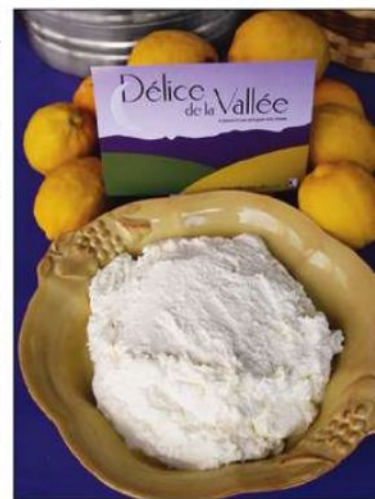


PHOTO TOP LEFT TERRY HANKINS; BOTTOM RIGHT JAMES FANUCCHI



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California's
Capital of

Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley's Zins are the perfect summer red—as long as you want a brawny, zesty, brambly barbecue wine, not a light cocktail sipper.

BY STEVE HEIMOFF

Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel holds a unique place in California. Napa Valley Zins may be more classically structured and “claret-like.” Sierra Foothills Zins are brawnier and more powerful, Paso Robles’ riper and softer. Russian River Valley Zinfandel is a touch darker and more tannic. But when it comes to the briars and brambles that give Zinfandel its inimitable mouthfeel and flavors, Dry Creek wins the honors.

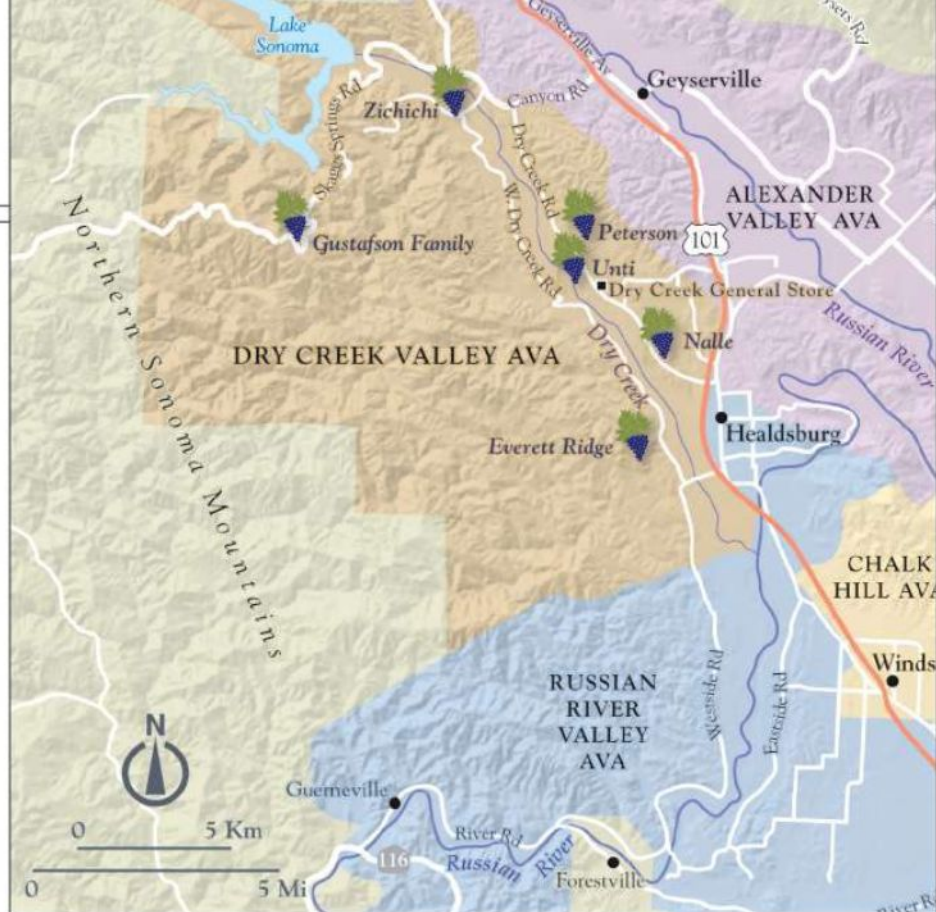
Perhaps no other area combines the special contribution of fruit from old vines with season-long heat and the occasional introduction of what amounts to field blending. The result are wines that exhibit powerful dark fruit flavors, distinctive spice-pepper-cinnamon notes and a hard-to-define floral undertone, the impact of which balances the high alcohol. The result is classic Zin, robust and hearty, perhaps California’s greatest barbecue wine.

It’s also important to note that the best Dry Creek Valley Zinfandels are relative bargains in the world of high-scoring California red wines, where top Cabernet goes for \$60, \$80, even \$100-plus. One problem:

they can be hard to find because production is relatively low.

This inland Sonoma County valley, at 80,000 acres, is a fair-sized American Viticultural Area sealed off by coastal hills from most of the maritime air that cools the Russian River Valley, which touches it just to the south. While folks in Guerneville and Forestville are wearing hoodies and scarves on this early Spring day, sun-warmed luncheon diners at the Dry Creek Store are looking for a place in the shade. And so it will be until November. This warmth makes Dry Creek Valley the perfect place to ripen Zinfandel.

Zin has a fabled history in Dry Creek. It’s been grown since at least



the 1860s, and by the 1880s accounted for more than half of the valley's 880 planted acres of grapes. Today, Dry Creek has about 9,000 acres of vines, but the number one red wine grape remains Zinfandel. (Sauvignon Blanc is the most widely planted white wine grape.)

Small production, old vines

Since the term "old vine" has no legal definition, it can be abused. In general, old Zinfandel vines are at least 30 years of age and "head-trained," as opposed to the more modern method of wire trellising on upright stakes.

Growers and winemakers sing the praises of old vine Zin. "Because they're so old, the vines are nearing the end of their cycle, and that makes them less vigorous," says Chris Sterling, one of two brothers (with Eric) who own Everett Ridge Winery. This absence of vigor makes for lower yields, which increases the wine's concentration. Sterling suggests an old vine also yields more balanced fruit; he has to acidify some of his

other wines, but not his Old Vine Zinfandel.

Jamie Peterson, who makes the wines at Peterson Winery, cites the bushy sprawl of old vines as a plus factor. "We get nice shading from the natural canopy. Instead of full sunlight"—which could bake the grapes in a climate like Dry Creek's—"we get dappled sunlight." Adds his dad, Fred, "These vines are balanced, and so the wine has more finesse."

One other thing needs to be noted about old vine Zinfandel: the vineyards often (not always) are planted to grapes other than Zinfandel. That's because the farmers who installed them (usually Italian-American immigrants and their descendants) didn't want to risk an entire harvest on the performance of a single variety. For example, Zichichi's oldest vines, which date to 1928, include Carignan, Napa Gamay and even some white varieties, in addition to Zinfandel. This varietal complexity seems to add a hedonistic quality to the resulting blend.

Even into modern times, some vintners deliberately plant their vineyards in this mixed, or field blend, way. Unti is one; their Zinfandel con-

DESIGNMAPS.COM; PHOTO STEVE HEIMOFF

A MIXED CASE OF TOP-SCORING DRY CREEK VALLEY ZINFANDELS

95 Deerfield 2006 Buchigani-Garcia Vineyard Old Vine Reserve Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$60. If you had to choose one Zinfandel to showcase Dry Creek Valley, it's this one. The vines are said to be over one hundred years of age, which makes you suspect it's a field blend with other varieties besides Zinfandel. Just superb. Has the balance and depth of a fine Cabernet Sauvignon, but with Zin's spicy, briary, brambly personality. Erupts in wild berry, currant, cola, leather, mocha and peppery spice flavors that are so rich and deep and long-lasting. Pricy, but sets a benchmark for Zinfandel. Only 550 cases were produced. **Editor's Choice.**

2007 Old Vine Estate Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$36. An impressive Zinfandel, notable for its complexity and charm. Exudes quintessential Zin character, with a mouthburst of red currants, black raspberry pie filling, wild cherries, sweet charred oak and masses of freshly crushed black pepper. There's even a chocolaty richness in the finish. Production of 921 cases is decent in the old-vine Zin category. **Editor's Choice.**

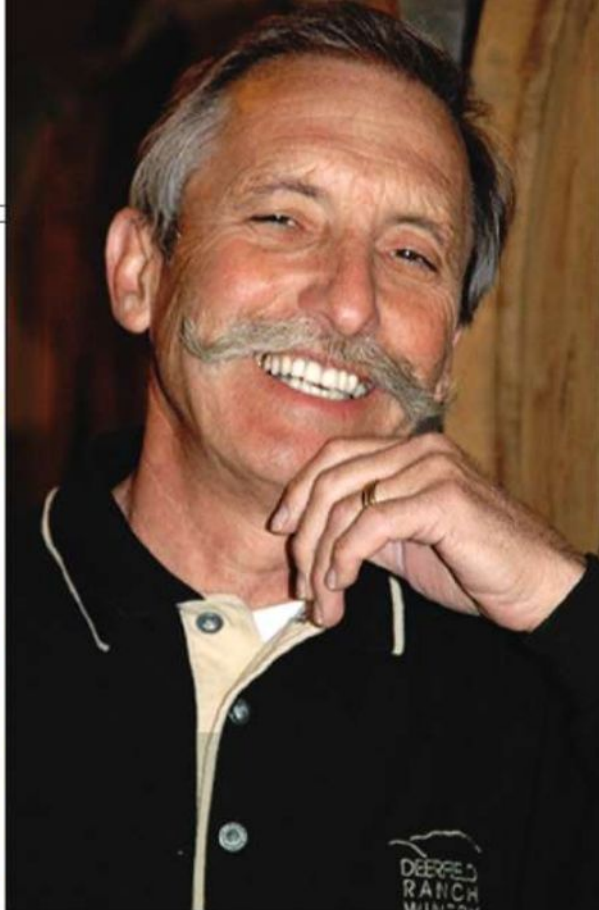
94 Gary Farrell 2007 Bradford Mountain Vineyards Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$40. A complex, sophisticated Zinfandel, although it's very young, and all the parts haven't come together. Shows luscious

waves of ripe forest blackberries, raspberries, red plums and nectarines, with notes of dry chocolate, sweet tobacco, balsam and cedar, finished with massive peppery spices. Notable for the purity and elegance of its tannin-acid structure, this beautiful Zinfandel should age well through 2014. **Cellar Selection.**

94 Seghesio 2007 Cortina Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$36. A beautiful, massive, mouthfilling Zinfandel. Impresses on every level, from the smooth, rich tannins to the dryness and above all the depth and range of flavors. Blackberries, chocolate, anise, bacon, pepper, sandalwood, the list goes on. Zinfandel doesn't get much richer than this. The alcohol is 15.5%. **Editor's Choice.**

93 Unti 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$26. Here's a big, thick, full-bodied and extracted wine that captures the essence of Dry Creek Valley Zin. It's marked by extremely briary, brambly flavors of wild blue and black berries and cola. Then the spices kick in, starting with black pepper, ranging through cinnamon and star anise, and then finishing with black pepper. Totally, completely bone dry and quite tannic and acidic, this Zinfandel needs rich fare, and should develop in the bottle over the next 4–5 years. **Editor's Choice.**

92 Alderbrook 2007 Wind Machine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$34. A successful Zinfandel that shows its Dry Creek origins



Far left to right: Zichichi Family Vineyard owner Steve Zichichi and winemaker Mikael Gulyash; George Unti is among those who plant a mix of varieties along with Zinfandel; Robert Rex, winemaker at Deerfield Ranch, believes that uneven ripening of old vine Zinfandel fruit may be a plus.

tains percentages of Petite Sirah and Barbera from the estate vineyard, which is located in the northern flatlands of mid-valley and was planted in the 1990s. "Blending has a long history in Dry Creek," explains proprietor George Unti. "It gives the wine more structure, and darkens it."

Yet old vines are not without problems. "They tend to be uneven ripeners, with green grapes and raisins in the same bunch," explains Robert Rex, winemaker at Deerfield Ranch, whose Buchigani-Garcia Vineyard Old Vine Reserve Zinfandel comes from 112-year-old vines. Rex believes this is because the vines' metabolism struggles, in some ill-defined way. Rex and his team used to work hard to hand-sort out the under- and overripe fruit, "but quite frankly, the wine wasn't as good," he says, adding, "it was one-dimensional." So the green berries and raisins now stay in, although moldy fruit and MOG (material other than grapes) still is sorted out. "The green grapes raise the acid content, and the overripe ones give the wine jammy, complex flavors," Rex theorizes.

Old Vine Estate, has 15.7% alcohol. "You need that alcohol for the stuffing," explains Zichichi's winemaker, Mikael Gulyash. He recalls an experiment from a few years ago: "We once picked one block earlier just to see if we could go back to lower alcohol, but in a double-blind tasting, everyone on the winery team picked the higher-alcohol Zin." He's not a fan of high alcohol for its own sake, Gulyash says, but "my balancing act is to find that sweet spot of ripeness, without overripe heaviness."

At Gustafson Family, whose 2007 Zinfandel also has 15.7% alcohol, winemaker Emmett Reed talks about the positives and negatives of high alcohol. "It's not ideal to be that high, but to get that jammy fruit profile is a reflection of a higher sugar content." Like all Dry Creek's winemakers, Reed notes that the radical nighttime temperature dropoff of many tens of degrees, especially at his winery's altitude of 1,800 feet, helps the grapes maintain high natural acidity, which balances the alcohol.

Of course, Dry Creek Valley is capable of producing dull, pruney and raisiny Zins, just as every Zin region can. If the vines are too vigorous, a

in the classic Zinfandel flavors and structure. Bone dry and not too high in alcohol, it offers a rich array of ripe grilled blackberries, blueberries, black pepper, Dr. Pepper cola and sweet, smoky sandalwood, wrapped into thick, fine tannins.

92 Del Carlo Winery 2006 Teldeschi Vineyards Home Ranch Old Vine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$32. Here's a very dry, tannic young Zinfandel that shows real depth and complexity. It has the rugged mouthfeel and extremely spicy, peppery flavors that mark a good Dry Creek Zin. The fruit suggests wild black, blue and red berries, picked along woody trails under a hot July sun. Drink now.

92 Dogwood 2007 Zinfandel

(Dry Creek Valley); \$30. A fine, savory Zinfandel that defines Dry Creek Valley, and is easy to recommend. Shows the beautiful balance of a fine red wine, with the sticky tannins and briary nature of a great Zinfandel. It's enormously rich in wild forest berry, currant, anise, bacon, pepper and sandalwood flavors, with a very long, very spicy finish. Drink now for freshness

92 Gustafson Family 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$36. Made in a superripe, high alcohol style, this Zin may be an acquired taste, but if you like this approach, it's a sensation. Dry, soft and a little hot, it shows massive blackberry tart, black cherry pie, blueberry jam, chocolate, anise, pepper

and Indian spice flavors. Almost Port-like, but never loses essential control, and a fine example of Dry Creek.

92 Everett Ridge 2006 Old Vine Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$35. Classic Dry Creek Zin. There's a reason this warmish Sonoma region is so famous for Zinfandel, and here it is. The wine is strong and spicy and tannic, with profuse wild berry, pine cone, red currant, cherry liqueur and cola flavors, made piquant with Indian spices. Despite its exuberance, it's dry and balanced. Just lovely if you're in the mood for Zinfandel.

92 Nalle 2007 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$35. A wonderful Zinfandel that perfectly captures the

essence of Dry Creek Valley, while keeping alcohol modest and the overall structure elegant. Perfectly dry, the wine shows complex waves of cherries and cola. It's vast in peppery spices, with notes of all kinds of essences from the rocks and soil. Just lovely, a world-class Zinfandel.

91 Peterson 2005 Bradford Mountain Vineyard Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$32. This is an enormously fruity Zinfandel that offers a flood of flavor, making it instantly likeable. Dry, full-bodied and tannic, it's powerful in briary blackberries, cherries, currants, cola, anise, pepper and cinnamon, with an edge of sweet, smoky oak and cocoa. Should develop over the next 6–8 years.



Left to right: Eric Sterling of Everett Ridge Winery, where old vine Zinfandel is appreciated for the concentration of its fruit; Jamie Peterson of Peterson Winery cites old vines for the shade provided by the canopy, allowing only dappled sunlight; an old vine in all its gnarly glory in Zichichi's vineyards.

lack of fruity concentration can emphasize hard tannins, as well as reveal vegetal smells and tastes. Lack of proper canopy management will let the sun burn grapes. Sometimes, vintners are too aggressive with acidifying Zinfandel, and the wines can taste bizarrely tart, almost sour. Some high alcohol wines just can't pull that act off—it's hard to say just why. And residual sugar is always a danger in wines that get as ripe as Zinfandel. All these are potential, as well as real, problems. Although they're rarer in Dry Creek Valley than in other places, consumers still need to be on their toes.

New faces, new places

The valley traditionally has been divided into three parts: the eastern slopes, which receive hot afternoon sunshine; the western slopes, which get morning sun and are spared the scorching direct light of afternoon; and the valley floor. Then, too, as Robert Rex points out, there's also a northwest-southeast gradient, since the lower valley near the Russian River is cooler than the upper valley toward Lake Sonoma. Good Zinfan-

IF YOU GO

Dry Creek is small enough to explore in a day or, if you really like tuning in on appellations, two days. Although it's within minutes of other Sonoma County appellations, including Russian River Valley and Alexander Valley, it does possess a sense of place that makes it interesting enough, from a terroir point of view, to explore on its own. Winters can be cold and rainy, but romantic. The best weather undoubtedly is in the fall, after summer's heat but before the rains return.

Your best bet is to stay in one of many places in and around Healdsburg. Most of Dry Creek Valley has a Healdsburg address (some are technically in Geyserville), but even Dry Creek's farthest stretches are at most a 25-minute drive from Healdsburg's tony inns and eateries. (For lodging, dining and shopping options as well as wineries to visit, click on Healdsburg.com.)

The valley has two main roads, Dry Creek and West Dry Creek, that run up either side of the narrow valley, occasionally connected with roads that cross the creek via scenic old bridges. Lake Sonoma is a beautiful state park, with ample opportunities for hiking and biking. More adventurous souls can head out Skaggs Springs Road and drive all the way to the sea, through Northern Sonoma's earthquake-shattered mountains and redwood forests.

del can come from anywhere; vines exposed to the sun can be (as we have seen with head-trained Zin) shielded from the fiercest rays by proper canopy management.

And don't assume that the valley floor is too fertile to produce concentrated Zin. Dry Creek itself—the stream that runs down the middle of the valley—would routinely flood during winter storms, which, over the millennia, deposited deep masses of stones. The stream was dammed years ago at Lake Sonoma and no longer floods, but the rocks that remain make for good drainage. “So the soil midvalley isn't as rich as you think,” explains George Unti. “The rocks keep the vines from being overly-aggressive.” Rex, who's worked with Dry Creek Valley grapes for 35 years and knows nearly every square inch of the region, has dug through the soils around Unti's place. “The soil there was washed out from the floods before the dam was built. You get a lot of river rock.”

Nowadays, a few vintners are pushing to the extremes of Dry Creek's AVA boundaries. One is Dan Gustafson, whose Gustafson Family Vineyards is in the far northwestern mountains of the appellation. This is a dramatic, wild area where no grapes had previously been planted. Gustafson explains that, when he first saw the undeveloped property, with Rockpile's jagged peaks on the far side of Lake Sonoma, he knew it had the makings of a great vineyard. Other spots in these wild hills, which range for 35 miles all the way to Annapolis on the Sonoma Coast, are likely to be perfect for a range of varieties, except for one major problem: water, or, more precisely, a lack of it. “That's the issue up there,” says Rex. (Wild critters, too, such as pigs and deer, also are eternal nuisances to grapevines.) Until more sources of water are available in these isolated high spots, where everything from Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon to Pinot Noir (as you approach the Sonoma Coast) seems possible, viticulture will be severely limited.

Too bad, because America's thirst for these wines is growing, never more so than at this time of year. As we head into the dog days of summer, backyard barbecues are being planned from coast to coast: paper plates piled high with ribs, chicken, sausages, potato salad, greens, the last of the season's sweet corn. Zinfandel is the go-to wine for that distinctly American fare, and Dry Creek Zin may just be the best of all **W**.



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taking
on

Tequila

Discover the dynamic
culture and spirit of
Mexico on Jalisco's
storied trail.

BY MIKE DESIMONE AND JEFF JENSSEN
PHOTOS BY JOHN HUBA

Long ago, in a place far, far away from Spring Break, beachfront resorts and frozen blender drinks, there lived a goddess named Mayahuel, who loved a half-man, half-god named Quetzlcoatl. Their love was forbidden by Mayahuel's grandmother, the goddess of darkness, who plucked the stars from the night sky and gave them the task of hunting down the lovers, killing Quetzalcoatl, and bringing her granddaughter home. In the heat of battle, Mayahuel was accidentally killed, and it is said that from the drops of her blood mingled with her lover's tears the first agave plant sprouted.

And from agave springs Tequila. Rich in myth and in history, Tequila is also as contemporary as any other major player in cocktail culture, in this sense: depending on the style, Tequilas can be sipped like a fine Cognac, or lend their assertive peppery-vegetal heat to cocktails.

And there is magic in Tequila, both the drink and the region. Wine lovers know the thrill, the enchantment, of enjoying wine within sight of where the grapes grow. But you can enjoy Burgundy in Burgundy and Chianti in Chianti, while for the Tequila geek there is only one pilgrimage to make: Jalisco, the state in central-western Mexico where 95% of agave is grown and the spirit Tequila is produced. Visiting there recently, our Tequila dreams came to life, seeing the sea of blue-green fronds—low palm tree-like succulents hugging the mineral-rich red earth.



The Partida family owns and operates the Tres Mujeres distillery and this rustic Tequila storefront in El Arenal.





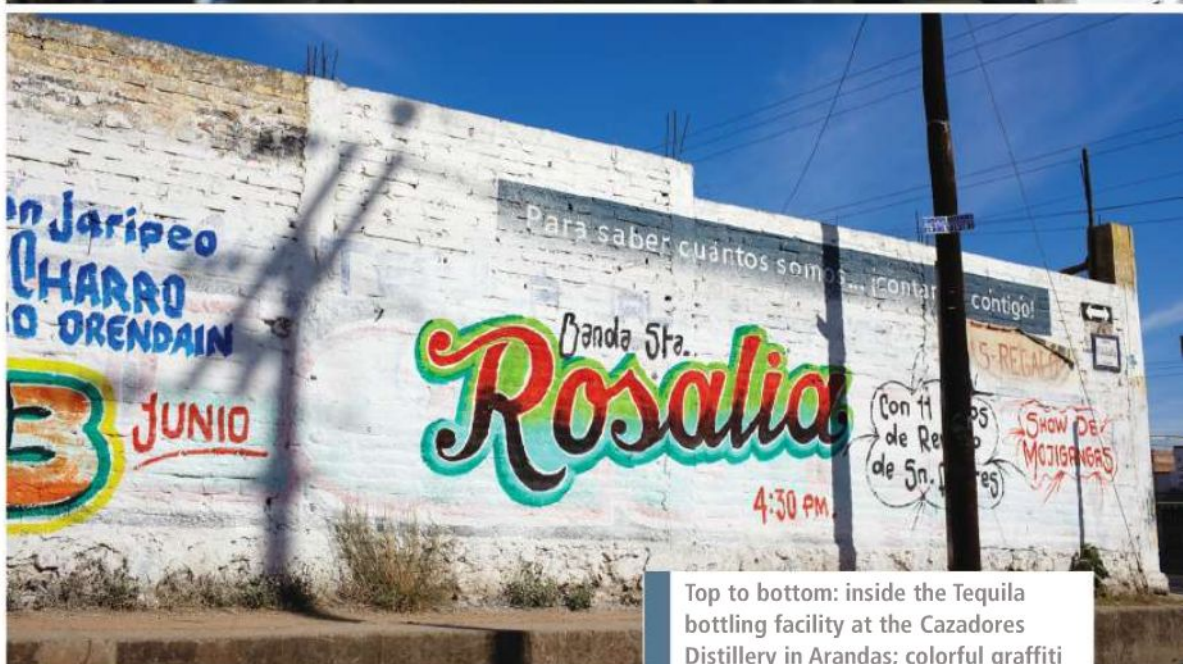
The history and tradition of Tequila figures strongly throughout this fertile region, and whether you traverse it by car, train or even hot-air balloon, you cannot help but return home with a newfound respect for the legendary spirit and your passion for it renewed.

The Tequila Trail, whose towns and distilleries have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a three-hour drive west from the bustling coastal resort, Puerto Vallarta, and winds its way through the lowlands region. The trail connects the Tequila-producing towns of El Arenal, Amatitán, Tequila, Magdalena and Teuchitlán. The vivid aquamarine of abundant fields of agave is rivaled by the cool blue of the area's lakes, and the landscape's prominent feature is the Tequila Volcano, closest to the town of Tequila. Its last eruption was over 200,000 years ago, but it made its mark on the terrain by depositing rich volcanic soil ideal for the cultivation of agave. The trail offers a variety of experiences for the Tequila lover, whether touring larger, internationally recognized distilleries or popping into small artisanal *fabricas* where family members personally pour their coveted product.

With a myriad of dining, hotel, distillery and sightseeing options, Jalisco offers travelers a world-class opportunity to savor Tequila in its native environment. The history of Tequila is deeply ingrained in the history of Mexico, and there is much national pride in the spirit.

The most famous town within the region is, not surprisingly, the town of Tequila. It is only a short drive from Puerto Vallarta and the Jalisco state capital, Guadalajara, but if sampling the local beverage will be the main point of your visit, it is best to plan an overnight stay here. The town of Tequila is notable for the National

Tequila Continued on page 53



Top to bottom: inside the Tequila bottling facility at the Cazadores Distillery in Arandas; colorful graffiti in the city of Tequila; Edith Fonseca Ramirez inspects a fresh delivery of agave at the Cazadores Distillery.

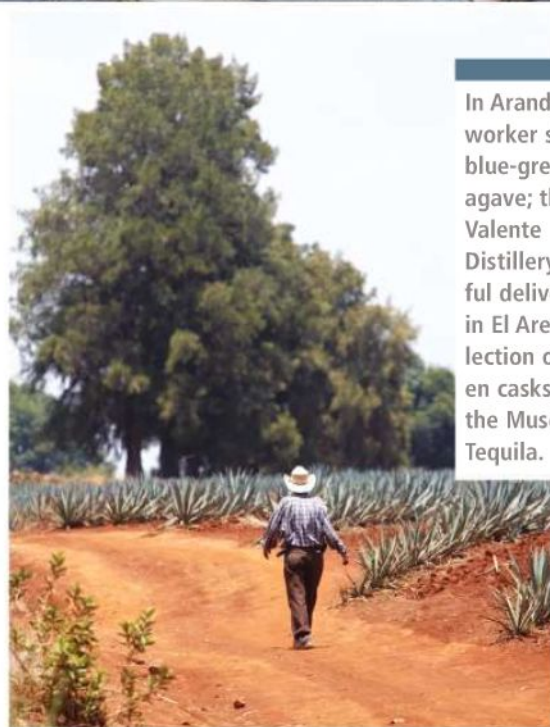
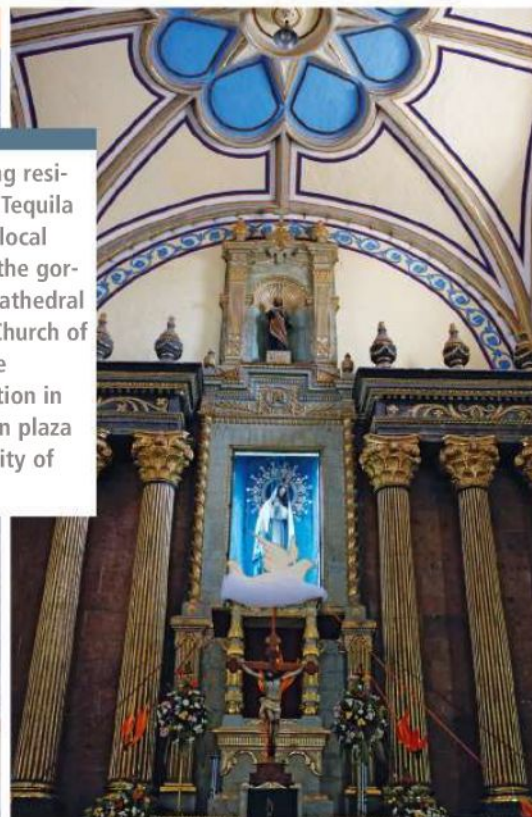


Clockwise from top: cycling the charming streets of the city of Tequila; Don Jose Daniel tests his Tequila in small batches at the family-run Don Valente distillery in El Arenal; a mariachi trumpeter warms up his pipes; enjoying a cool treat at the Hotel Casa Dulce Maria in Tequila.

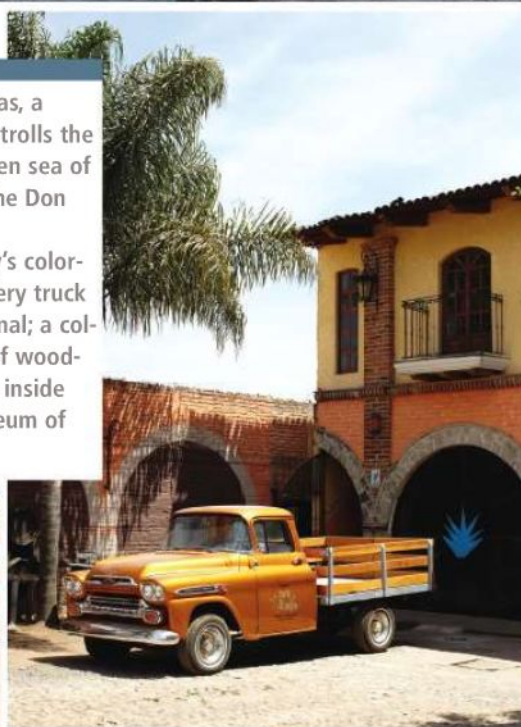




A smiling resident of Tequila exudes local charm; the gorgeous cathedral of the Church of the Pure Conception in the main plaza of the city of Tequila.



In Arandas, a worker strolls the blue-green sea of agave; the Don Valente Distillery's colorful delivery truck in El Arenal; a collection of wooden casks inside the Museum of Tequila.



TALKING TEQUILA



When shopping for Tequila, look for "100% blue agave" on the label. If you don't find that assurance, it is a **mixto**, with as little as 51% blue agave Tequila. It might be okay for mixing in fruit juices and liqueurs, but for quality, crowd-pleasing, headache-free cocktails, stick with the 100% blue agave

bottlings.

In the true blue 100% category, these are the types: **Blanco** and **Silver** Tequilas are either unaged or aged for two months in oak barrels or stainless steel; bracing, peppery and vegetal spirits, can be sipped but best for cocktails. The best **Gold** Tequilas are blends of Blan-

cos and aged Tequilas; they will have a slightly rounder profile and faint caramel notes. Lesser Golds are mere blends of Blancos and coloring. **Reposado** (rested) Tequilas have been aged for no less than two months but no more than a year in oak barrels. Again, can reward sipping neat but still deluxe

cocktail-worthy.

Anejo (aged) Tequilas have been aged in oak barrels for a minimum of one year but less than three years. Definitely sipping Tequilas, with the oak-driven flavors minimizing the nervy-vegetal flavors of the younger spirits.

Extra Anejo are aged a minimum of three years in oak.

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BLACK CHERRIES

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the glass. The

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is rounded with

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DISTILLERIES ON & NEAR THE TEQUILA TRAIL

Check out these diverse distilleries on your tasting adventure—the best the region has to offer.

Cazadores Distillery, Arandas

Located in the highlands town of Arandas, the red mineral-rich soil of the Los Altos de Jalisco imparts a unique flavor to one of the best-selling brands of premium Tequila in Mexico. Take a tour of the impressive fermentation and distillation areas and visit the large barrel aging room before sitting down to a tasting in the visitor's center. You will have the pleasure of enjoying silver, reposado and anejo Tequilas from Cazadores as well as all three from their super-premium Corzo brand. cazadores.com and corzo.com

Hacienda Del Patron

On the road to Arandas, very much in the planning stages (and therefore not receiving visitors) is the site of Patron's future visitors center and tasting room, near the nine (and soon 10) small-batch distilleries where this popular spirit is crafted. patronspirits.com

Destileria la Alborada, Tequila

Five blocks from the main square in Tequila, the Alvarez-Borges family has been making quality Tequila for 15 years. English-language tours may be led by the owner, Edgardo. granjubileo.com

Don Valente Distillery, El Arenal

A fine example of a family-run distillery, where father and son Don Jose Daniel and Jorge Jauregui make small-batch Tequilas. Located on the Tequila Trail, this distillery bakes their pinas in old-style brick ovens. tequiladonvalente.com

Fabrica de Tequila la Cofradia, Tequila

This distillery plus boutique hotel offers themed suites, a museum and a restaurant, all on the hacienda grounds. tequilacofradia.com.mx

Mundo Cuervo, Tequila

Directly on the town square, make sure to visit Cuervo's exhibition room, tasting bar and gift shop. Tours in English, twice daily, at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. mundocuervo.com.mx

Tequila Herradura, Amatitan

Producing delicious, highly regarded Tequila since 1870, Casa Herradura is most easily reached by the Tequila Express Train. herradura.com.mx

Tequila Sauza, Tequila

Centrally located in Tequila, this well-known brand has a long and impressive history: Don Cenobio Sauza started distilling agave 130 years ago and was the first to export Tequila to the United States. sauzatequila.com

Tequila Tres Mujeres, Amatitan

Owned and run by the Partida family, with over one million agave plants, "Three Ladies" distillery offers lauded Tequila and family pedigree.

tresmujerestequila.com

Museum of Tequila and its monument to the goddess Mayahuel. Its main plaza is anchored at one end by the imposing Church of the Pure Conception, and the equally imposing Cuervo World visitor's center, at the other. Distilleries and Tequila bars surround stalls selling local crafts in the center of the plaza.

For a more urban environment, the nerve center of Jalisco is Guadalajara, a sprawling colonial city dominated by wide tree-lined avenues. Its architecture is a blend of Spanish and French, and several historical mansions on Avenida Vallarta have been converted into luxurious restaurants. Dinner choices abound, from high-end, progressive Mexican to a roster of international cuisines. While globespanning wine lists tend to lean towards Spain, Mexico, Chile and Argentina, comprehensive Tequila menus are by nature a purely local affair. Guadalajara's central historic district includes a pedestrian zone dotted with open plazas, fountains and sculpture. The Metropolitan Cathedral draws many worshippers and visitors every day, and the Government Palace, with its murals by Jalisco native Jose Clemente Orozco, is one of the area's most visited sites. Guadalajara sits between the "lowlands" and the "highlands" of D.O. Tequila, and it is convenient to the Tequila Trail and the beachfront resorts of Puerto Vallarta.

Although nearby Tlaquepaque may seem to be a neighborhood of Guadalajara, it is technically a city unto itself. Characterized by low-lying adobe buildings, cobblestone streets and strolling mariachi musicians, it is famous for pottery and blown glass. Whether you are on the lookout for souvenir shot glasses, Day of the Dead articles, heavy wooden furniture or fine art, you will find it here. Inviting garden restaurants serving traditional Mexican food hide behind whitewashed stone walls, and your pleasant stroll from shop to shop will be accompanied by the vibrant sound of horns, guitar and violin.

Whatever the level of expertise or interest, D.O. Tequila is a fascinating sidetrip for discerning, Mexico-bound cocktail and spirits fans. Shedding new light on the culture, cuisine and history of Jalisco, it's an exciting way to embrace the connoisseurship of this fast-growing gem. 



FOR TEQUILA REGION RESTAURANTS, LODGINGS, TASTING NOTES AND MORE, GO TO winemag.com/tequilatrip

THE ORIGINAL MARGARITA

& THE LEGEND OF MARGARITA SAMES



The original margarita was invented by socialite Margaret "Margarita" Sames in 1948. According to legend, it was during a party at her cliffside hacienda in Acapulco that Margarita began experimenting with what she then called "the drink". Looking for something to cut the dust of the hot afternoon, she mixed tequila, Cointreau, and fresh lime juice. Her cocktail kept the party going for two weeks. To this day, Margarita Sames says a Margarita without Cointreau is not worth its salt!

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CRAFT BEER GOES BOOM

In this era of endless domestic craft beer choices, it's nice to know what you're getting yourself into.

A brief guide to the best American beer styles to date.

BY LAUREN BUZZEO

America has gone craft. Hardcore.

With over 1,595 breweries operating in 2009, the highest total since before Prohibition, it's clear that there are currently more American beer options than many alive today have ever experienced. With breweries in every U.S. state, virtually every American lives within driving distance of a craft brewery—the small, independently owned and traditional breweries creating the beers America is craving.

But in this new world of countless beer options, it's easy to become overwhelmed with the decisions at hand. So many styles, so many producers...where to begin?

First, it's important to understand the basics, and, basically, there are two main groups of beers: ales and lagers. The main difference is that ales are brewed with top-fermenting yeast while lagers are brewed with bottom-fermenting yeast. Lager yeast is inherently more fragile; it has a lower alcohol tolerance and undergoes fermentation at a lower temperature. The lower temperature leads to a slower, longer fermentation and storage period (the word comes from the German *lagern*, meaning “to store”). When compared to an ale, a lager will have fewer esters and aromas, greater clarity and a mellow palate that's crisper and less fruity.

After you've got that down, it's time to dive into some more specific common beer styles. Though descriptions and categories are always changing, style guidelines are a great resource to what you can expect in any given bottle. There's still a lot of debate about the specifics of any given style, but the most popular and widely accepted sources of information are the Brewers Association and Beer Judge Certification Program's style guidelines.

We've compiled our own mini-source of information for some of the most prevalent American beer styles. Consider this guide as your entry into the wonderful world of American craft beer. Welcome home, America...we've got a cold one waiting for you.

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER





ALES



American Pale Ale

Description: American Pale Ales, or APAs, are often considered the gateway to the world of domestic craft beer. As many people's first ale experience, the style is widely known as an approachable offering for novice beer drinkers looking for a place to begin their craft journey. APAs are pale gold to medium copper in color with medium body and moderate carbonation. The use of American hop varieties produces noticeable fruity, floral and citrus hop characteristics of varying intensity, as well as moderate to high hop bitterness and a medium to dry finish. However, the hops must be well balanced by low to medium-high clean malt flavors, making this a solid but overall more mellow beer than its IPA cousin. APAs are a good group choice as they're great with food, easy to drink and sure to be enjoyed by most.

Alcohol:
4.5–6.2% abv*

Bitterness:
30–45 IBUs**

Glassware: Mug, stein or pint glass

Serving Temp. 45°–50°F

Food Pairings: Very flexible and versatile; great with burgers, pizza, Colby and Cheddar cheese, maple flan and caramelized desserts like bananas Foster.



Classic Examples: Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Anchor Liberty Ale, Oskar Blues Dale's Pale Ale, Full Sail Pale Ale, Widmer Drifter Pale Ale

* alcohol by volume

** International Bittering Units



American Amber/Red Ale

Description: Similar to APAs but the focus here is more on the malts than the hops, with lovely toasted notes and a soft caramel character both in the bouquet and the mouth as well as an overall light fruitiness. There may be a low to moderate hop presence typically through the use of American hop varieties, with varying astringency and hop aromas and flavors. Pouring a light copper to dark amber-brown color with a substantial off-white head and good retention, they're full-bodied with a richness and decadence that many ale drinkers enjoy and that pairs well with most meats. Imperial or Double Amber Ales are also available for those who are looking for more of a hop profile as well as an alcoholic kick.

Alcohol: 4.5–6.2% abv
(8–10.5% for Imperial/Double)

Bitterness: 25–40 IBUs
(55–85 for Imperial/Double)

Glassware: Mug, stein or pint glass

Serving Temperature: 50°–55°F



Food Pairings: Great with a wide range of meats including beef, chicken and seafood as well as Port Salut or blue cheese and dulce de leche or pecan-based desserts.

Classic Examples: New Belgium Fat Tire Amber Ale, Tröegs Nugget Nectar Imperial Amber, Bear Republic Red Rocket Ale, Rogue American Amber Ale, Anderson Valley Brewing Boont Amber Ale



American IPA

Description: The domestic craft beer scene has largely been focused on the uniqueness, success and demand for American IPAs, which are more flavorful than English India Pale Ales, offering intense citrusy, floral, resinous, piney and/or fruity American-variety hop character and high bitterness. Typically, American IPAs are clear and medium-gold to red in color, though some haze may be perceived if the brew was dry hopped (that is, dry hops were added to fermenting or aging beer). The body is typically medium weight with a solid malt backbone that supports the high hop presence and preserves the balance of the brew. Imperial or Double IPAs are typically very intense to utterly mind-blowing, with high hop astringency, fruity esters and increased alcohol, and are pure bliss to hop-heads the world over. Though this may not be the style for you if bitter isn't your thing, it's certainly worth a try.

Alcohol: 5.5–7.5% abv
(7.5–10.5% for Imperial/Double)

Bitterness: 40–70 IBUs
(60–120 for Imperial/Double)

Glassware: Mug, stein or pint glass (snifter or tulip for Imperial/Double)

Serving Temperature: 50°–55°F

Food Pairings: Thai or Indian cuisine (definitely an ideal choice for curry), salmon, mild gorgonzola or brie, and sweet spice-infused desserts like apple tart or carrot cake.

Classic Examples: Avery The Maharaja, Stone Ruination IPA, Dogfish Head 60 Minute IPA, Lagunitas IPA, Heavy Seas Loose Cannon Hop³ Ale



American Pale Wheat Ale

Description: Belgian Witbiers are some of the most popular and sought-after beers for novices and connoisseurs alike, and American examples of both Belgian and German influence are beginning to garner the same intense appreciation. Pale to golden in color, they display citrus-dominant wheat flavors and a very refreshing and highly carbonated mouth. They're typically produced, if not year round, as a spring or summer seasonal. American producers are fond of taking the traditional European styles and adding their own twist: a different spice, an unusual hop, a special brewing technique. The result is a gamut of unique and exceptionally rewarding brews, each expressing its own sense of identity and personality. As for the lemon wedge that frequently accompanies these brews, it's completely a personal choice: some people find it livens up the intense wheat profile while others believe it overwhelms the beer's natural flavors.

Alcohol: 4.0–7.0% abv

Bitterness: 8–20 IBUs

Glassware: Weizen vase glass, French jelly glass or pint glass

Serving Temperature: 45°–50°F

Food Pairings: So traditionally coupled with German cuisine it's hard not to recommend it, but will also pair very well with lighter fare such as salads, sushi and vegetable dishes as well as soft, lightly flavored cheeses such as mozzarella.

Classic Examples: Harpoon UFO, Bell's Oberon Ale, Three Floyds Gumballhead, Goose Island 312 Urban Wheat, Magic Hat Circus Boy





American Stout

Description: Craft brewers have really taken this classically English or Irish style to a whole new extreme, producing a wide array of styles for all types of stout lovers. Don't be fooled by the dark brown to black opaque color; while these beers are usually robust, they are not all necessarily as dense and heavy as one might think. From dry, easy-drinking stouts to barrel-aged roasty flavor bombs, the amount of creativity and experimentation that goes into these offerings is nothing short of amazing. Caramel, chocolate and roasted coffee notes are common on the nose and medium- to full-bodied mouth. Hops are frequently used and can vary in intensity from moderate to high, usually resulting in a resinous hop character. Imperial Stouts offer a little bit more of everything, with increased alcohol, a fuller mouth and, of course, aggressive hop characteristics.

Alcohol: 4.0–8.0% abv
(7–12% for Double/Imperial)

Bitterness: 35–75 IBUs
(50–90 for Double/Imperial)

Glassware: Mug or pint glass (snifter for Double/Imperial)

Serving Temperature: 50°–55°F



Food Pairings: Smoky barbecue or grilled game or meat, gouda or Havarti cheese, and any chocolate dessert.

Classic Examples: Rogue Shakespeare Stout, Deschutes Obsidian Stout, Old Dominion Oak Barrel

Stout, Southern Tier Mokah Imperial Stout, Founders Kentucky Breakfast Stout



American Porter

Description: Porters, like stouts, are subject to interpretation and personalization by the American craft brewer. Historically (and presently) the two styles are very similar in overall profile and ingredients used, with differentiation between them remaining somewhat blurred. Originally perceived as a lighter stout, porters can also vary widely, resulting in a bitter roasty beer to a sweeter chocolaty one and everything in between. As in stouts, brewers are open to using numerous ingredient additions such as coffee or chocolate to complement the style's inherent rich, toasty character. Also common is the use of oak for long-term aging, with selections resting for months in Bourbon, rum or even wine barrels to impart another layer of depth and complexity to the brew. Imperial porters also exist, though they are not as common a style as the aforementioned imperial stouts.

Alcohol: 4.0–7.5% abv

Bitterness: 25–50 IBUs

Glassware: Mug or pint glass

Serving Temperature: 50°–55°F



Food Pairings: Much like stouts, porters go well with barbecue and smoked fare like sausage or fish, buttery cheeses, and just about any chocolate-based dessert.

Classic Examples: Bell's Porter, Alaskan Smoked Porter, Otter Creek Stovepipe Porter, Smuttynose Robust Porter, Great Lakes Edmund Fitzgerald Porter

CRAFT SUDS STATS



**\$6.98 Bil.
2009**

**\$6.32 Bil.
2008**

There's no denying that the American craft beer industry has been booming over the past decade. Posting double digit growth for four consecutive years, domestic craft brewers (small, independently owned and traditional) have slowly been increasing their share of the overall beer segment. Even in difficult times, craft brewers saw retail dollar values rise from \$6.32 billion in 2008 to \$6.98 billion in 2009, while overall beer sales were down 2.2% and imports were down 9.8%.

**2.2%
overall**

**9.8%
imports**



BREW FACTS

- Growth of the craft brewing industry in 2009 was 7.2% by volume and 10.3% by dollars compared to growth in 2008 of 5.9% by volume and 10.1% by dollars.
- Craft brewers sold an estimated 9,115,635 barrels* of beer in 2009, up from 8,501,713 in 2008.
- Overall, U.S. beer sales were down 2.2% in 2009.
- Imported beer sales were down 9.8% in 2009, equivalent to a loss of 2.8 million barrels.
- The craft brewing sales share in 2009 was 4.3% by volume and 6.9% by dollars.
- Craft brewer retail dollar value in 2009 was an estimated \$6.98 billion, up from \$6.32 billion in 2008.

- 1,595 breweries operated for some or all of 2009, the highest total since before Prohibition.

*1 barrel = 31 U.S. gallons

FACTS COURTESY BREWERS ASSOCIATION

LAGERS



American Wild Ale

Description: One of the newest and perhaps most unique, exciting styles in the American craft brewing scene, American wild ales are just what they sound like: the beers are introduced to “wild” yeast or bacteria, such as *brettanomyces* (*brettanomyces bruxellensis*, *brettanomyces lambicus* or *brettanomyces anomalus*), *pediococcus* and/or *lactobacillus*. While brett has long been a significant part of Belgian brewing, the wild yeast has been making more appearances state-side. Undoubtedly different and somewhat polarizing, the result of the use of such wild organism(s) is a specific calling-card of characteristics including but not limited to horse, barnyard, leather and sweat. While this might sound strange and even somewhat disgusting, the integration of these components in balance with the pronounced organic acids and development of flavors from typical barrel aging results in a brew of depth and complexity.

Alcohol: 4.0–8.7% abv **Bitterness:** 20–40 IBUs

Glassware: Tulip, flute or oversized wine glass

Serving Temperature 45°–50°F



Food Pairings: Fantastic with pungent cheese like Maytag blue or gorgonzola, salad, beef stew and orange crème brûlée.

Classic Examples: Captain Lawrence Rosso e Marrone, Russian River Temptation, Lost Abbey Cuvee de Tomme, Jolly Pumpkin La Roja, Allagash Interlude



American Pilsner

Description: Straw to deep gold in color, this style has its roots in pre-Prohibition America when German immigrants came to the U.S. with their time-honored recipes, but has today evolved to please the current beer-drinking demographic or mimic more traditional German or Bohemian pilsners. They are light- to medium-weight with moderate malt aromas and flavors and typically higher alcohol than their European counterparts. The use of adjuncts such as corn or rice is allowed in American-style pilsners, with a corn-like sweetness or DMS (dimethyl sulfide, a sulfur compound that produces the taste and aroma of sweet corn) occasionally perceptible. The use of noble hops is preferred, with medium to high hop aroma, flavor and bitterness to balance out the sweeter characteristics of the style. The German-style pilsner is still the preference for many American brewers.

Alcohol: 4.5–6.0% abv **Bitterness:** 25–40 IBUs

Glassware: Pilsner, slender cylinder glass

Serving Temperature 40°–45°F



Food Pairings: A good option for lighter fare such as sushi, salads, grilled chicken, flake fish, mild cheddar and lighter desserts like bundt cake with lemon custard or vanilla pudding with fresh berries.

Classic Examples: Victory Prima Pils, Southampton Keller Pils, Sam Adams Noble Pils, Stoudt's Pils, Port Brewing's Panzer Imperial Pilsner



American Amber/Red Lager

Description: Originally just a slight derivation of the Vienna lager style, this group of beers is starting to define itself more and more through its American interpretations. Though it should not be at a high level, the use of noble hops is frequently noticeable in flavor, aroma and bitterness, with the flexibility regarding the usage of hops being what sets these beers apart from more traditional lagers. The dominating characteristics are a caramel-infused malt backbone and overall roasted presence on the nose and mouth. As the name suggests, the color ranges from light amber to mahogany and the palate is medium-bodied but crisp in the finish. Exhibits a little more depth and sweet roasty malt notes than a traditional light lager.

Alcohol: 4.5–5.5% abv **Bitterness:** 18–30 IBUs

Glassware: Pilsner, mug, stein or pint glass

Serving Temperature 40°–50°F

Food Pairings: Great for outdoor cooking like barbecue, smoked meats and chili, Latin-American dishes and poached pears.

Classic Examples: Blue Point Toasted Lager, Brooklyn Lager, Yuengling, Coney Island Lager, Flying Dog Old Scratch Amber Lager



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Summer Ceviche

With fresh-from-the-sea aromas and lip-smacking textures and flavors, this Latin American dish cools down even the hottest summer day.

BY GRETCHEN ROBERTS

Ceviche is Latin America's answer to sushi. Like sushi, the star ingredient in ceviche is *fruto del mar* (fruit of the sea) accompanied by the freshest, simplest ingredients. The difference is that with ceviche—fresh fish marinated in tangy lime juice, crunchy salt, spicy chiles, and finished with a sprinkling of herbs and onion—the ingredients are “cooked” in the acidic citrus juice and finished with a variety of garnishes from fresh corn on the cob to cooked cubed sweet potatoes.

PHOTO JON VAN GORDER



Four-Citrus Sea Scallops
with Cucumber

Ceviche is appearing on more restaurant menus across the country. Increasingly visible on the coasts, *cevicherias*, with menus devoted exclusively to citrus-marinated seafood, showcase the incredible array of flavors, colors and textures of this fresh, healthy dish. “I call ceviche the perfect food, because it’s high in protein, low in fat, light and fresh,” says Chef Douglas Rodriguez, an internationally acclaimed restaurateur and author of *The Great Ceviche Book* (Ten Speed Press, 2010).

Ceviche (also spelled *cebiche* and *seviche*, and commonly pronounced say-VEE-chay) originated in Peru, possibly as a way to preserve fresh fish before refrigeration. Because the basic ingredients are so simple, ceviche is a great appetizer to toss together at home on a warm summer evening. In South America, ceviche is traditionally a lunchtime food, but stateside is served as a dinnertime appetizer or even a full meal, which Rodriguez encourages: “If you’re going to buy the ingredients, get different things to make three or four ceviches for a tasting platter,” he advises.

The most basic rendition of ceviche is fresh fish (sea bass, corvina, tuna, salmon, halibut and grouper are good choices) or seafood (try shrimp, scallops, oysters and mussels), combined with a citrus juice base, traditionally lime juice because it’s the most acidic of the citruses and will “cook” the fish faster, and balancing ingredients like salt, herbs, ginger and chiles. Variations abound, from a tomato-based sauce to a tropical addition of coconut milk and avocado.

Finding fresh seafood can be a challenge if you don’t live near the coast. Michelle Bernstein, a Miami chef/restaurateur, advises using your nose to seek out the freshest seafood. “Go to someone you trust, and ask if you can smell the fish. You want to smell the ocean. If it smells fishy or like chemicals, don’t buy it,” she says. “Most importantly, try to get the most local fish for wherever you are in the world. Ask your fishmonger for a recommendation.”

Rodriguez recommends frozen fish and seafood if you’re not close to the water, since it’s often frozen right on the boat and is fresher than “fresh” fish and easier to slice. Look for a dry-pack of frozen seafood rather than one preserved in water, which contains chemicals.

Both Rodriguez and Bern-

stein tend to blanch seafood like shrimp and squid before tossing into a ceviche. “Seafood protein is a lot denser than fish protein, so a quick blanch in salt water will take away the raw outside edge and give it great texture,” Bernstein says.

Buy fresh seafood the day you make ceviche, and keep both the fish and the finished dish ice-cold. Show off the bright colors of ceviche with individual servings in martini or shot glasses, or go family-style with a big rimmed platter or bowl on the table. Garnishes like popcorn, corn nuts, sweet potatoes and fresh sweet corn help cleanse the palate and add richness to a lean, tangy ceviche.

Ceviche pairs well with a wide range of beverages. For Rodriguez, the classic match is beer—the darker, the better, he says. “A rich, creamy dark stout or bock strips the heat and acid of the ceviche right off the palate.” Pisco Sour, a Peruvian cocktail made with pisco, fresh lemon juice, simple syrup and egg white is another ceviche staple; the creamy egg white balances out the acidic ceviche and its lemon juice matches ceviche’s tang.

For wine, a high-acid white like Sauvignon Blanc, Grüner Veltliner or sparkling wine complements the citrus and fresh fish flavors. Whatever you drink, make sure it’s oak-free and low in alcohol, Rodriguez says. “A heavy, oaked Chardonnay would taste like a piece of burning wood in your mouth. You can’t go wrong with a refreshing white wine made in stainless steel.”

Basic Ceviche

These basic proportions from Chef Michelle Bernstein will help you get started on the road to ceviche nirvana. Use this recipe as a base, and feel free to experiment. For example, if you want a sweeter marinade, add the orange and lemon juices.

4 cups (about 2 pounds) fish or seafood
 1½ tablespoons kosher or sea salt
 1½ tablespoons peeled minced ginger
 2 celery ribs, finely chopped
 ½ serrano pepper, finely chopped
 Juice of 4 limes (or 4 limes, 2 lemons, and 1 orange)
 ¼ red onion, julienned
 2 tablespoons fresh chopped cilantro
 Fresh popped popcorn, corn nuts and/or roasted cubed sweet potatoes, for garnish.





Ecuadorian Shrimp

Thinly slice fish and mix with salt, ginger, celery and chiles. Refrigerate about 30 minutes. Add juice, red onion and cilantro. Marinate to taste (light fish and seafood need less time than heavy, oily fish and seafood). Serve with some of the juice and garnishes.

Four-Citrus Sea Scallops with Cucumber

Sea scallops, or conchitas, cook quickly. The combination of four citrus juices has a lower acidity than lime alone and will actually slow down the “cooking” process. The Valencia orange and grapefruit also add a pleasant sweetness.

1½ pounds large sea scallops
Juice of 6 limes
1 tablespoon sea salt
1 pink grapefruit
Juice of 1 pink grapefruit
Juice of 1 Valencia orange
Juice of 5 lemons
1 cucumber, cut in half lengthwise, seeded, and thinly sliced into half-moons
3 green onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro

Set the scallops in a single layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, cover with plastic wrap, and freeze for about 1 hour, until very firm, but not frozen solid. Slice scallops crosswise into very thin rounds. In a nonreactive bowl, toss sliced scallops in the lime juice and salt. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Peel the grapefruit by slicing off the top and bottom, setting it upright on a flat surface, and using a sharp knife to cut away the peel, white pith and exterior membrane. Cut from top to bottom, following the curve of the fruit; don’t cut too deeply into the flesh of the grapefruit. Holding the grapefruit in one hand, run a knife along one of the interior membranes toward the center of the fruit. Do this again along the neighboring membrane to remove each grapefruit section. Repeat until all sections are removed. Roughly chop the grapefruit sections and reserve.

Before serving, drain the scallops, discarding the lime juice. In a clean nonreactive bowl, blend the grapefruit, orange and lemon juices and

gently fold in the reserved grapefruit sections, the remaining ingredients, and the scallops. *Serves 6.*

Wine recommendation: With its light, bright, herbal flavors, this ceviche calls for a mineral, acidic white. The 2009 Penalolén Sauvignon Blanc from Chile’s Casablanca Valley evokes flavors of the sea; a floral Pinot Gris like the 2008 King Estate highlights the slight sweetness of the citrus juices and scallops.

Ecuadorian Shrimp

This tomato-based ceviche, very similar to a shrimp cocktail, was inspired by a trip to Ecuador and is one of Rodríguez’s favorites.

For the Sauce

1 large tomato, roasted, peeled, seeded and chopped
2 jalapeños, roasted, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 red bell pepper, roasted, peeled, seeded and chopped
½ onion, roasted, peeled and chopped
¾ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
¼ cup canned tomato juice
1 tablespoon sugar
3 shots Tabasco sauce, or to taste
Pinch of salt

For the Ceviche

1 pound extra-large shrimp (16 to 20), blanched
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
2 tablespoons sliced green onions
¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup freshly popped plain, unsalted popcorn for garnish
½ cup unsalted corn nuts for garnish

Roast the tomato, jalapeños, bell pepper, and onion over an open barbecue flame or a gas burner by holding with tongs and turning occasionally until skins are blistered and blackened. Transfer to a bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap; let steam 10–15 minutes. When cool enough to handle, remove and discard the skins. Peel, seed and chop ingredients. Purée with juices, sugar and Tabasco in blender until smooth.

Just before serving, in a nonreactive bowl, toss the shrimp with the sauce, red onion, chives, green onions and cilantro. Garnish with popcorn and corn nuts. *Serves 4.*

Wine recommendation: Rosé is a classic match with a tomato-based dish; the 2008 Banfi Vintners Centine Rosé, a blend of Sangiovese, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, emphasizes the sweet, fruity tomatoes. A brut Champagne like Nicholas Feuillatte NV is refreshingly acidic with light, yeasty undertones that complement the slightly smoky flavor of the sauce. 

Sea scallop and shrimp recipes reprinted with permission from The Great Ceviche Book by Douglas Rodríguez, copyright © 2003, 2010. Published by Ten Speed Press, a division of Random House, Inc.

THE MIRACLE HANGOVER CURE?

Leche de tigre (tiger’s milk), the juice left over from marinating ceviche, is often served in small shot glasses in restaurants. Some ceviche connoisseurs believe that drinking it will cure a hangover. (Some add a shot of Pisco, a Peruvian grape brandy, for good measure.)

Rodríguez isn’t a fan. “Doing a shot of fishy marinade when you’re hung over? I’m not crazy about it.” He’d rather order ceviche and eat

the fish with a fork and sip the juice with a spoon—and he’ll skip overindulging the night before, thank you. Bernstein believes ceviche itself cures hangovers, not just the juice. “A combination of lime, chile, ginger, and fresh seafood can take away any ailment,” she says.

Want to try the juice? Pour it into a glass and drink it, or use a spoon and eat it like a soup once the ceviche is gone.



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PHOTO: MICK ROCK/CEPHAS

Italy

THE NEW FACE OF BRUNELLO

One of Italy's most prestigious denominations, Brunello di Montalcino, has seen its fair share of Machiavellian intrigue and Dantesque drama over the past decade. Vintages 2002 and 2003 were astounding low notes: the first because of rainy, soggy conditions and the latter because of extreme heat. Two years ago, this sleepy Tuscany hilltop hamlet was the backdrop of a wine scandal: a handful of the area's headliner producers were alleged to have illegally added foreign grapes to Brunello, which by law is 100% Sangiovese Grosso.

Next came the happy 2004 vintage (released last year) which had all the hallmarks of an excellent vintage like the five star vintages 1995, 1997, 1998 (four stars but may have deserved five) and 2001 (also four stars but excellent). Climatic conditions with a long, warm growing season and dry harvest were excellent. But these wines were released (Brunello di Montalcino is set to market on January 1, five years after the harvest date) following the Brunellogate scandal and vintners had evidently lost their mojo. Following years of criti-

cal acclaim and consumer enthusiasm, what should have been an excellent vintage saw uneven wines, many of which exhibited tired or browning characteristics and premature aging.

This brings us to 2005 Brunello di Montalcino, on the market now. The vintage earned four stars, but that may have been on the generous side. On the whole, these wines exhibit beautiful aromatic characteristics of wild berries, ripe cherry, spice, cola and forest floor. In the mouth, however, they are lighter, leaner and simpler than we would have expected. Some exceptions are the beautiful 2005 Cupano, 2005 Altesino Montosoli and 2005 Castello Banfi Poggio alle Mura Brunello di Montalcino.

What really blew us away was the 2004 Riserva Brunello di Montalcino (one more year of aging) that showed all the natural qualities of this vintage without the insecurities in winemaking we detected after the scandal. These wines hold their own and show amazing intensity both on the nose in the mouth. We loved the 2004 Riserva from Le Chiusse, Corte Pavone and Podere Brizio. Salute!

—MONICA LARNER

ITALY TUSCANY

BRUNELLO RISERVA

95 Corte Pavone 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$75.

Loacker/Corte Pavone is on a roll of late and is making some of the finest Brunello you will find. Organic farming practices have helped shape a truly tremendous wine with deep concentration and amazing intensity. The wine is rich and velvety and bursting with bright fruit nuances. Drink after 2015. Imported by Hey Day Corporation. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

95 Le Chiusse 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$120.

Le Chiusse has produced one of Montalcino's brightest stars with this Riserva 2004 (the base 2004 Brunello didn't impress us as nearly much). This is a delicious wine that you will enjoy on every level. The intensity and purity of the fruit and spice aromas are impressive and the mouthfeel is

extra-plush and supple. Yet, those firm tannins give it the balance and structure it needs. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

94 Collosorbo 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$70.

Here's an austere and sophisticated Brunello Riserva with beautifully integrated notes of spice, toast and cola that give backbone to brighter aromas of blackberry, cherry and plum. There's a very attractive intensity and smoothness to this wine that suggest a natural pairing with meat on the grill. Imported by Frank Johnson Selections. —M.L.

94 Donatella Cinelli Colombini 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$95.

Here's a meaty and ripe Brunello Riserva with aromas of mature fruit, leather, tar and smoked ham or bacon. The wine is plush and full with enormous intensity and persistency. It's also beautifully smooth in the mouth and although it already drinks well now, you could cellar it ten years or more. Imported by Banville

Continued on page 77



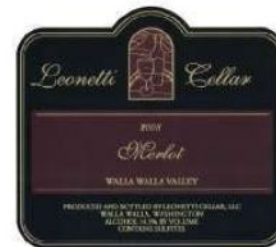
97 Betz Family 2007 Père de Famille Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$60.

This Père de Famille is 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, with the rest split between Merlot and Petit Verdot. Sweet, pure fruit—black currants and black cherry and blackberry—is packed tight, concentrated and polished, but needing hours to breathe open. Dense, dusty, complex, complicated, this wine is sophisticated beyond description. **Cellar Selection.**



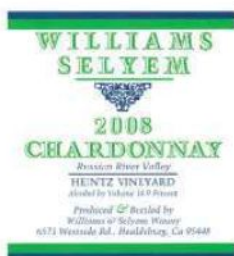
97 Leonetti Cellar 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla); \$85.

The 76% Cabernet Sauvignon is melded with 17% Merlot, 4% Carmenère, and 3% Malbec, creating a stunningly dense, polished, tight wine. It's light years away from the Leonetti's of the 1980s—compact and loaded with black fruits, pepper, fresh herbs, rock, earth, toast and smoke. It's so tight that it's almost impossible to dissect. It needs time—a lot of time. **Cellar Selection.**

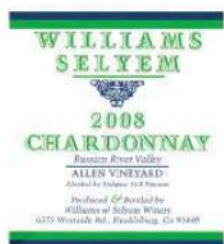


96 Leonetti Cellar 2008 Merlot (Walla Walla); \$70.

This is 100% varietal, from the Loess, Seven Hills, Pepper Bridge, and Mill Creek Upland vineyards. A deep, intense take on Merlot, it's so dark and concentrated that it dances on the edge of bitterness, but in a style reminiscent of the finest Italian Merlots, that use that flavor to define and elucidate a dark and potent wine. In the mouth it fills out with luscious cherry and plum and blackberry fruit, baking chocolate, coconut and nougat. Yet it remains sleek and stylish, with a strong licorice note. **Cellar Selection.**



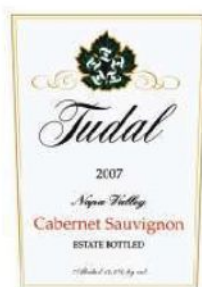
96 Williams Selyem 2008 Heintz Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$50. Bob Cabral's Chardonnays sometimes get lost in the brilliant glare of his Pinot Noirs, but he has spent years exploring the rich, flamboyant side of the variety, with great success. This bottling represents William Selyem Chardonnay at its best. It's ultra-decadent in apricot and pear flavors, with a strong oak influence, and yet an underlying minerality and fine acidity balance it so that it doesn't tire as you drink. In fact, you want more.



95 Williams Selyem 2008 Allen Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$50. Amazingly rich, one of the most opulent Chardonnays you can drink now. Just wows the mouth with pineapple, pear, exotic tropical fruit, crème brûlée, vanilla custard, buttered toast and cinnamon spice flavors that go on and on through the finish. Also shows fine, tart acidity, which provides needed balance. Yes, it's superripe, but this is what California Chardonnay does at its best.



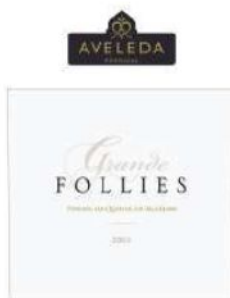
94 Parallel 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$55. Delicious and compelling 100% Cabernet from a great vintage. Shows classically developed, sweet Napa tannins and wonderfully ripe fruit. As expressive as the blackberries and currants are, they're reined in with minerals and herbs to produce exquisite tension. Best now, with a good decant, and should develop for many years. **Editors' Choice.**



94 Tudal 2007 Estate Bottled Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$45. An absolutely beautiful, first-class Cabernet that drinks really well now, and has the balance to ride out quite a few years in the cellar. Marked by near-perfect balance, it has ripe, sweet tannins and just enough acidity to lift the complex flavors of blackberries, blackcurrants, anise and smoky cedar. This is a really great restaurant wine.



94 Vineyard 7&8 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain); \$125. Bring this bottle straight to the cellar. Don't even think about opening it before, say, 2013. All you'll get is a mouthful of hard, sandpapery tannins. But it's a very deeply flavored Cabernet, packed with massive blackberry, black currant, plum and cedar flavors, and there's a granitic minerality that must come from the soil. Very finely crafted. **Cellar Selection.**



93 Aveleda 2003 Grande Follies Quinta da Aguieira (Bairrada); \$50. A step up from the Follies range, this is a big and richly smooth black wine, its tannins well integrated into the great plum juice fruits. The wine is ripe, now ready to drink, the final blackberry acidity giving a bright boost. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.



93 Aveleda 2007 Grande Follies Quinta da Aguieira (Bairrada); \$40. A blend of Chardonnay and Maria Gomes, here is a ripe wood- and apricot-flavored wine. It is full, spicy, livened by crispness from a red apple skin texture. The vanilla from the wood adds a delicious richness to this impressive wine. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.



93 Betz Family 2007 Clos de Betz Red Wine (Columbia Valley); \$45. Bob Betz continues to refine his Bordeaux blends. This new Clos de Betz is much more forward than the monumental Père de Famille and sports ripe, dark, round, appealing fruit flavors of luscious raspberry and cassis, swathed in *beaucoup de barrel*. Toasty oak dissolves into polished tannins, finishing with black tea, licorice, smoke and charcoal. **Editors' Choice.**

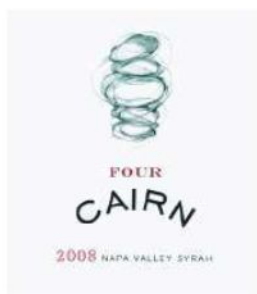


93 Dunham Cellars 2006 Lewis Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$75. Despite being given an extra year of bottle age, the 2006 Lewis Vineyard designate remains tight and unyielding upon first being opened. With alcohol under 14%, this pure varietal achieves classic styling. The tannins are firm and ripe, and threads of herb stitch together the tart fruit flavors of red currant and raspberry. Quite tart, juicy and fresh, it has the structure to age gracefully for decades. **Cellar Selection.**



93 Fattoria dei Barbi 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.

Pretty notes of Italian espresso, chocolate and spice revolve around a core of solid black fruit. This is an elegant and refined wine that boasts a traditional style that is never overdone or too powerful. In fact, it showcases its delicate berry nuances very nicely in the mouth. Drink after 2014. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports.



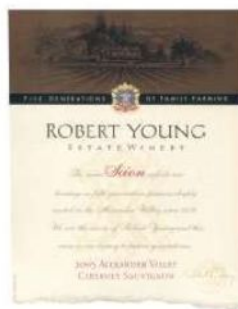
93 Four Cairn 2008 Syrah (Napa Valley); \$45.

A dramatically rich Syrah made along Northern Rhône lines. Dry, full-bodied and tannic, its flavors now are primary and fresh, suggesting summer blackberries, a few of them shriveled into raisins, and the whole sprinkled with cassis and black pepper. Needs time. Better after 2013.



93 Pacific Rim 2008 Solstice Vineyard Riesling (Yakima Valley); \$25.

Pacific Rim made just 200 cases of this Germanic wine, with grapes from a 1972 Yakima valley planting. The alcohol is 12.4 percent, the residual sugar 1.4 percent; the wine flinty, with dense citrus rind phenolics, and great length. There are subtle traces of honey, lingering threads that suggest everything from apples to papaya. **Editors' Choice.**



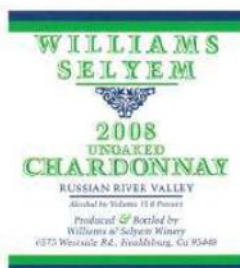
93 Robert Young 2005 Scion Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley); \$58.

A fine Cabernet that defines Alexander Valley's benchlands. It's entirely dry, a subtle wine whose herb-tinged blackberries, cherries and cedar turn increasingly complex in the glass. Shows a lightness and airy feeling that differentiates it from the heavier cult Napa style. Already throwing some sediment, so you might want to decant it before serving.



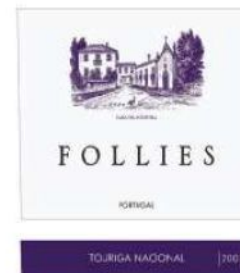
93 Vineyard 7&8 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain); \$75.

Lots of chocolate, oak and blackberry-infused flavor in this dry, tannic young wine. It sure is tight, almost rude in its immaturity, with an astringency that makes the palate pucker. But it's so deep and dense, so packed with intensity, you just know it will come around in the cellar. 2013–2019. **Cellar Selection.**



93 Williams Selyem 2008 Unoaked Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$35.

Williams Selyem is now playing the unoaked game, and with their fruit sources, wow. Most winemakers would kill to put oak onto these grapes. The wine is tremendous in pineapples, pears, papayas and kiwi fruit. It's so rich, you won't even notice the absence of caramel and all those oaky influences.



92 Aveleda 2007 Follies Touriga Nacional (Bairrada); \$18.

Continuing the succession of fine wines from Aveleda's Quinta da Agueira in Bairrada, this is a powerful, firmly tannic but ultimately smooth wine. It has big ripe swathes of dark plums, figs and refreshing sweet acidity. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. **Editors' Choice.**



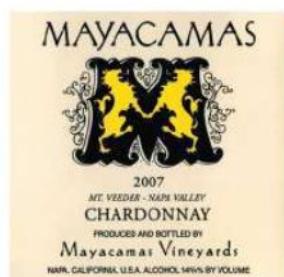
92 Dunham Cellars 2006 Lewis Vineyard Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$75.

Like its companion Cabernet, the Lewis vineyard designate is still quite hard and unyielding when first opened. The dense, complex aromas suggest the power locked up within, and the wine slowly emerges, at first peppery and herbal, yet layered and complex; then showing some silk and satin, with a strong licorice streak.

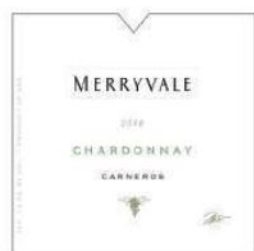


92 Envy 2007 Vaca Mountain Petite Sirah (Napa Valley); \$45.

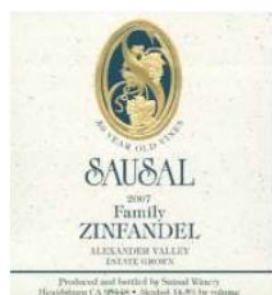
This is a perfect Petite Sirah to cellar. It defines the Napa ageworthy style, with its beautifully ripe but hard tannins, deeply ripe flavors and overall balance. The blackberry, blueberry, black currant, licorice and black pepper flavors need time for everything to come together. Hold until after 2013. **Cellar Selection.**



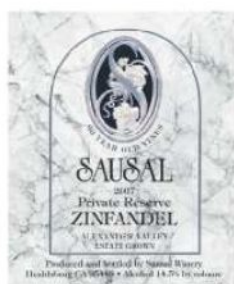
92 Mayacamas 2007 Chardonnay (Mount Veeder); \$35. Offering none of the oaky, fruity richness of popular Chardonnays, this bottle needs to be figured out in a different way. It's super-dry, acidic and mineral, with citrus fruit flavors that seem barely touched by oak. It's a wine of structural integrity, made in the style of a great Chablis. One of the rare Chardonnays that should age. **Cellar Selection.**



92 Merryvale 2008 Chardonnay (Carneros); \$35. Rich and opulent, in the California coastal style. The grapes come from some respected Carneros vineyards, including Hyde and Stanly Ranch, and the pedigree shows in the balance of ripeness and acidity. With pineapple, mango, green apple, crème brûlée and buttered toast flavors, it's just delicious. Great with Dungeness crab and sourdough bread and butter.



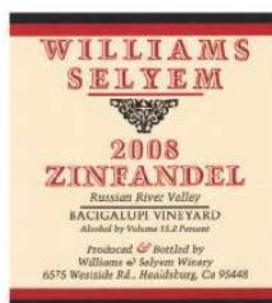
92 Sausal 2007 Family Estate Grown Zinfandel (Alexander Valley); \$19. Just beautiful, showing Alexander Valley Zin at its best. Dry and full-bodied, it's enormously flavorful in spicy wild berries, with a cherry liqueur smoothness. But it's not high in alcohol, and is thoroughly balanced and elegant. **Editors' Choice.**



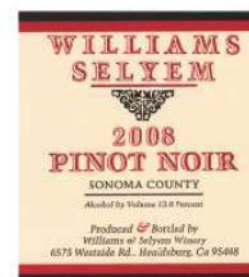
92 Sausal 2007 Private Reserve Zinfandel (Alexander Valley); \$24. Very rich and extracted, and much more full-bodied than Sausal's "Family" Zin, with which it was co-released. This is one to cellar for a few years, to let things come together. Just massive in chocolate, berry jam and pepper spices, wrapped into firm, refined tannins.



92 Vincent Delaporte 2008 Chavignol (Sancerre); \$30. A brilliant wine, shining with bright fruits, fresh and crisp. The fact that it also has weight gives it an extra intensity of herbaceous flavors, lifted by green peas. There is a definite steely edge to the finish. Imported by Vineyard Brands. **Editors' Choice.**



92 Williams Selyem 2008 Bacigalupi Vineyard Zinfandel (Russian River Valley); \$50. Volume is what this Zin is all about. The vineyard is in the warmest part of the valley, and the grapes sure did get ripe. They flood the mouth with potent flavors of blackberries, cherries, licorice and red plums, with a peppery, briary quality and a finish so softly sweet, it's almost chocolatey. Just yummy.



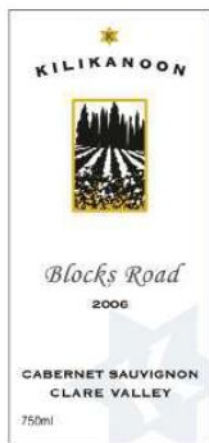
92 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$34. Although this is the least costly of the winery's Pinots, it's a lovely wine. Blending from a vast source of vineyards has given winemaker Cabral the ability to fill in divots of every kind. Gentle and dry, this rich, complex Pinot Noir has the elegance and style you expect from Williams Selyem.



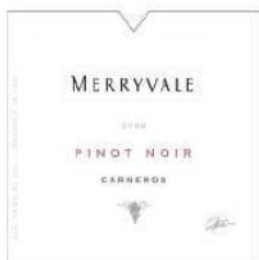
91 Comenge 2005 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$30. Impressive for the way it blends modern richness with authentic aromas and flavors. The nose offers prune, leather, blackberry and fine dried cheese, while the palate is savory and smooth, with chocolatey, round berry fruit flavors and then additional chocolate and toast on the finish. Lively and dense, but not heavy. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners.



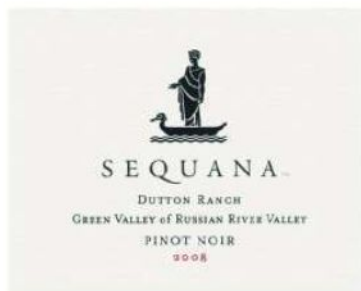
91 Francis Ford Coppola 2008 Director's Cut Chardonnay (Russian River Valley); \$20. A very interesting Chardonnay, and easily worth the price. It was fermented in 50% new French oak, which gives it a creamy, smoky richness, while the underlying fruit flavors are ripe and rewarding, suggesting pineapples, Asian pears, green apples and Meyer lemons. A beautiful, complex and balanced wine. **Editors' Choice.**



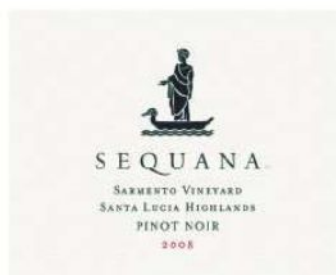
91 Kilikanoon 2006 Blocks Road Cabernet Sauvignon (Clare Valley); \$30. A full-bodied Cab, with bold cassis flavors tinged with vanilla. There's no hint of green in this ripe, rich wine and no hard edges, either. Long on the finish—a top Cab for a reasonable price. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. **Editors' Choice.**



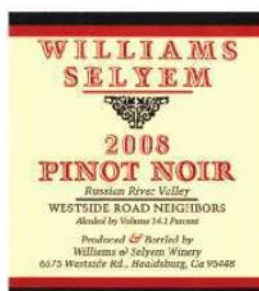
91 Merryvale 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$35. This is a very rich, fruity Pinot Noir, so if you like ripeness, you'll love it. Floods the mouth with cherries, raspberries and strawberries, while 50% new French oak adds even richer notes of vanilla and buttered toast. It's flamboyant now, and should be opened in the next 3–4 years.



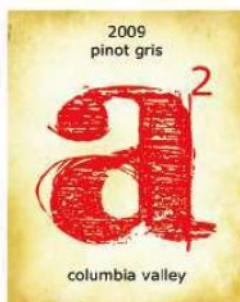
91 Sequana 2008 Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir (Green Valley); \$40. Ultrarich and forward in fruit, and what's wrong with that? Floods the palate with pie filling flavors of cherries and raspberries, with a rich coating of oak that adds vanilla, buttered toast and caramel. The richness is balanced with crisp acidity.



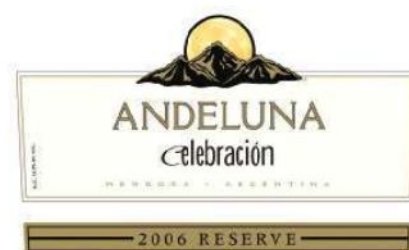
91 Sequana 2008 Sarmento Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$32. Winemaker James MacPhail brings his touch to this ripe, delicious Pinot Noir. It explodes in raspberries and cherries, but it's no more fruit bomb. Shows fine acidity and even a dusting of tannins that provide structural integrity. Really nice now, and should develop over the next 4–6 years.



91 Williams Selyem 2008 Westside Road Neighbors Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$67. You don't want to drink this wine now. It's way too tannic, which also accentuates the acidity. It all makes for a tough palate experience, despite rich raspberry, cherry, cola and cedar flavors. So stash this vastly interesting Pinot Noir in your cellar for 3–5 years. But if you can't, decant. Even overnight. **Cellar Selection.**



90 Alexandria Nicole 2009 Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$16. Fragrant, inviting, this lovely Pinot Gris bursts out with fresh cut pear flavors so crisp you want to bite it rather than sip it. Lovely perfumed highlights of clover and sweet blossom add interest. There is just enough phenolic bite to give the finish further definition.



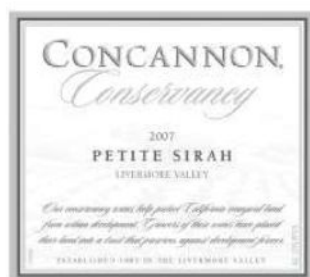
90 Aneluna 2006 Celebración Reserve (Mendoza); \$20. A power-packed blend of 60% Cabernet and 40% Malbec that offers mossy aromas, earth and lush black fruit scents. The palate is lively yet balanced, with saturated wild berry, toast, anise and pepper flavors. Dark, toasted and showing licorice on the finish. A little hot and aggressive, so drink in late 2010 through 2012. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange.



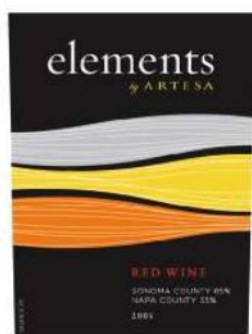
90 Boschendal 2008 1685 Grande Cuvée Sauvignon Blanc (Coastal Region); \$16. This zippy, fresh sip starts with tropical fruit and citrus aromas, followed by balanced citrus and asparagus flavors. All of it dances on a racy acidity. An elegant, world-class white. Imported by Cape Wine Ventures.



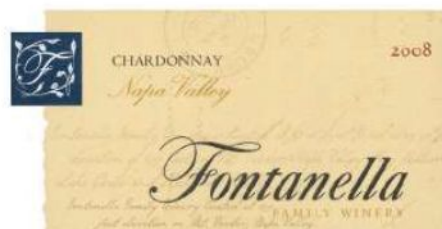
90 Browne Family 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley); \$50. This is surprisingly fruit forward for a vintage that is often hard and unyielding. Big, ripe, round flavors of black cherry, plum, cassis and spice fill a round and tasty midpalate. The wine does not extend itself from there; it's content to be a big mouthful of well-ripened fruit.



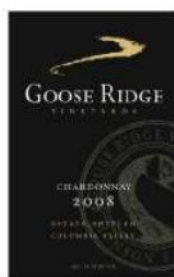
90 Concannon 2007 Conservancy Petite Sirah (Livermore Valley); \$15. Concannon has an historic stake in Livermore Valley Petite Sirah, hence the name Conservancy, and with this wine, they do themselves, and it, credit. Dry and full-bodied, it's a peppery, tannic wine with satisfying blackberry and leather flavors. Will gradually unfold over many years. **Editors' Choice.**



90 Elements by Artesa 2006 Red Wine (California); \$18. A very nice red wine for drinking now with foods from all sorts of ethnicities and styles. Made from a bunch of varieties, including Cabernet, Grenache and Tempranillo, the wine is dry and tannic, with deep flavors of blackberries, black currants, anise and sweet, smoky sandalwood. **Editors' Choice.**



90 Fontanella 2008 Chardonnay (Napa Valley); \$30. A lean, steely and slightly herbaceous Chardonnay, whose brisk elegance makes up for the absence of richness. This Chablis-style wine is marked by minerals and suggestions of lemons and limes, as well as strong acidity. Calls for fresh crab in the shell, with plenty of drawn butter for dipping.



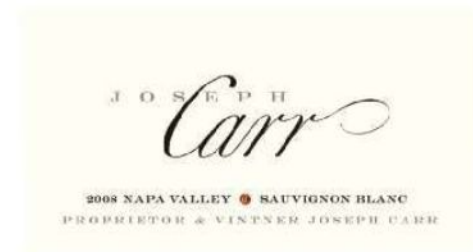
90 Goose Ridge 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$18. Inviting, fresh, racy scents mix pineapple, citrus and light tropical fruits. There is an interesting mouthfeel not unlike Sémillon, though none is indicated in the blend. The wine has substantial length and unusual highlights of spice, clove and mint, along with plenty of rich, ripe fruit to hold down the center palate. Not shy at 14.8% alcohol, this is a fine effort from consulting winemaker Charlie Hoppes.



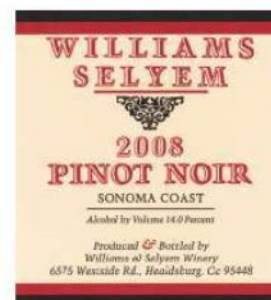
90 Guy Saget 2008 Domaine de la Perrière (Sancerre); \$25. Green pear and quince flavors are found on a wine that has some richness. It is easy and soft initially, then a firm texture and the freshest acidity come through. But finally, it return to a rich character. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports.



90 Hamilton Russell 2008 Chardonnay (Hemel en Aarde); \$32. Nutty, spicy aromas are followed by a beautiful mélange of toasted nut, cream and fresh fruit. The wine is rounded and elegant with its mineral lift and toasted finish. Pair with lobster, salmon and poultry. Imported by Vineyard Brands.



90 Joseph Carr 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$16. We need wines like this that are super-dry, ultra-crisp in acidity and sleekly lean. This one's the anti-Chardonnay. It's tightly wound in minerals and citrus fruits, a Sancerre-style wine born to drink with food. Crab salad in lettuce wraps or chicken satay skewers come to mind. **Editors' Choice.**



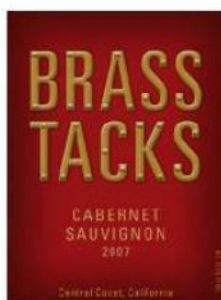
90 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$46. Shows tart cranberry crispness in addition to richer cherry and raspberry fruit, but it's a fairly aloof wine now, with competing parts. Even though this isn't a single-vineyard Pinot, it needs time in the cellar, to let everything mellow. Give it 4–5 years.



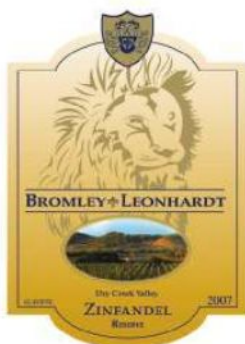
89 Brass Tacks 2008 Riesling (Monterey); \$15. This would be a wonderful wine even if it cost a little more. As it is, it's a steal. Shows refined apricot, peach, lychee, mineral and floral flavors, finished with brisk, mouth-watering acidity, and an absolutely dry finish. One of the best Riesling values available in California, and a tremendous cocktail wine. Just 600 cases were produced. **Editors' Choice.**



89 Quivira 2009 Wine Creek Ranch Grenache Rosé (Dry Creek Valley); \$15. A wonderful blush wine that does what rosé is supposed to do. Stimulates the palate with mouthwateringly crisp citrus, red cherry, raspberry, vanilla and spice flavors. So easy to drink, it's one of the better rosés out there. **Editors' Choice.**

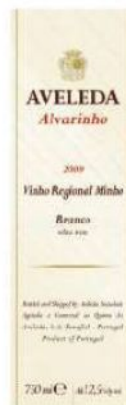


88 Brass Tacks 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Coast); \$15. Very nice for the price. Dry and smooth, with blackberry, cherry, cola and currant flavors that have a scoury mouthfeel, because of the tannins. Lots of class and even some complexity. **Editors' Choice.**

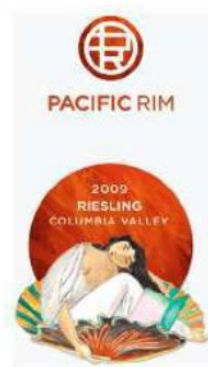


87 Bromley-Leonhardt 2007 Reserve Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley); \$48. Good Zinny flavors in this wine, ranging from ripe blackberries and chocolate-covered mint candy to black pepper. A bit too fruity-sweet and simple in structure, but a nice wine for backyard summer sipping.

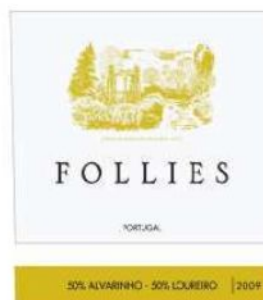
BESTBUYS



92 Aveleda 2009 Alvarinho (Minho); \$13. Alvarinho is the grape of northern Vinho Verde, giving a style that is rich and complex. The fruit here fits that character, packed with pear, apple and citrus flavors and a light texture of lime zest. Note: this wine is commercialized as Follies Alvarinho outside the U.S. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.

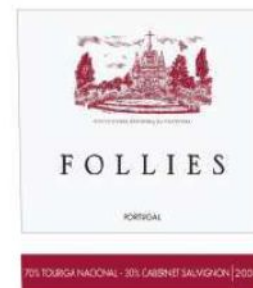


92 Pacific Rim 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$11. A classic Washington tasting-room Riesling—only better. Opulent and fruity, with apricots, star anise, mint, a very nice spicy streak that lifts it up, and adds a lot of complexity. Smooth and supple, it coats the palate, captures some floral highlights, even a bit of marshmallow.



91 Aveleda 2009 Follies Alvarinho-Loureiro (Minho); \$13. A broad style of wine, bringing in the richness of Alvarinho and the more crisp character of Loureiro. It is very much in Vinho Verde style, just with extra power to give a final creamy character. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.

BESTBUYS



91 Aveleda 2008 Follies Touriga Nacional-Cabernet Sauvignon (Beiras); \$13. From the aroma, this seems heavily wooded, but on the palate the wood spice is becoming well integrated with the dark berry fruits and mineral texture. It is certainly young. Already, though, the fruit is showing its potential richness. Give it 3–4 years. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.



91 Pacific Rim 2009 Organic Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$14. Well-integrated flavors of mixed fruits are augmented with a sneaky streak of caramel, and a slight buttery softness in the finish. Very appealing, with a good long finish.

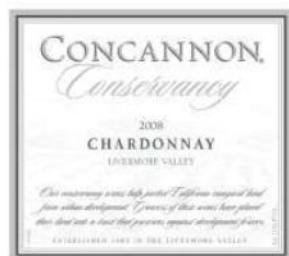
90 Adega Cooperativa do Cartaxo 2006 Bridão Reserva (Ribatejo); \$13. Big and rich, this is a round and structured wine. It has great layers of ripe herbs, full black fruits and exotic spice to go over the dry tannins. The final flavors are rich, tarry, juicy as well as powerful. Imported by Wine Enterprises.



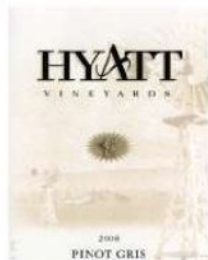
BESTBUYS



90 Aveleda 2009 Quinta da Aveleda (Vinho Verde); \$9. Now in a smart clear blue bottle, this is Aveleda's estate wine. It is always a classic, with just some extra weight to give it distinction. The flavors are apple, brightened with lime, finishing with vibrant acidity. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC.



90 Concannon 2008 Conservancy Chardonnay (Livermore Valley); \$15. A very nice Chardonnay that's dry and crisp and elegant. Shows tart, leesy flavors of citrus fruits, apricots and pears, with a steely minerality that may come from those famous Livermore rocks. Great price for a Chardonnay of this quality.



90 Hyatt Vineyards 2008 Pinot Gris (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. Firm and full of fresh pear and apple and white peach fruit flavors. A clever blend that includes Muscat, Viognier and Riesling. Crisp and full-bodied, with a very clean and refreshing mouthfeel that extends into a bright, satisfying finish.

BESTBUYS



90 Viña Costeira 2008 Ribeiro; \$15. A treasure at this price. The nose is impeccably clean, with tropical fruit and honeyed melon aromas. Elegant in the mouth yet there's also just the right acidic pop to liven up the melon, kiwi and apple flavors. A pure, fruity ride. Treixadura, Torrontées, Loureira and Albariño comprise the blend.

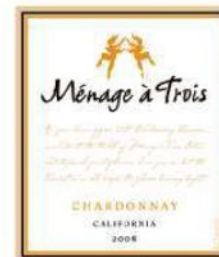


90 J Vineyards & Winery 2009 Pinot Gris (California); \$15. With no oak or malolactic fermentation, this wine is all pure, savory fruit. Made from a combination of Clarksburg, in the Delta, and Monterey fruit, it combines warm climate ripeness with coastal acidity to produce a crisp wine with intricate lime and spice flavors.

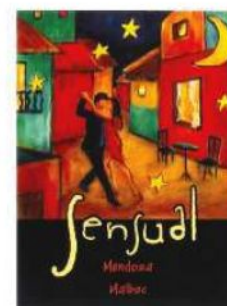


88 Magnificent Wine Company 2008 House Wine (Columbia Valley); \$13. This tart and aromatic white blend could be labeled Chardonnay; less than a quarter is a mix of Riesling, Muscat, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris. It's detailed and lively, with bright citrus, pineapple, pink grapefruit and sweet spice.

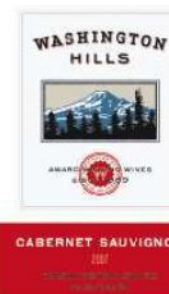
BESTBUYS



88 Ménage a Trois 2008 Chardonnay (California); \$12. Great price for a Chardonnay of this quality. The grapes come from cool coastal areas, and the wine brims with crisp, long hangtime ripeness, accented with toasty oak. Feels rich and creamy, with pineapple, tropical fruit and vanilla flavors.

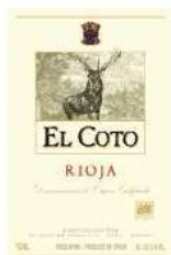


88 Valentin Bianchi 2009 Sensual Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. A little sweet and candied on the nose but there are also floral aromas that are alluring. The palate is plump but offers good balance and structure, while the flavors run toward beefy dark berry fruit, spice and chocolate. Long, deep and roasted on the finish. Quite good for ten bucks. Imported by Quintessential Wines.



88 Washington Hills 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (Washington); \$10. It's hard to find a \$10 Cabernet with this much muscle and depth. Solid black cherry and cassis fruit anchors a wine with dark streaks of espresso, bitter chocolate and smoke. The tannins are nicely ripened also, and the wine leaves a chocolaty trail as it fades.

BESTBUYS



87 El Coto 2009 Rosado (Rioja); \$10.

Fresh as can be, with pure aromas of nectarine and cherry blossoms. The palate is light but refreshing and lithe, with semisweet, punchy flavors of orange, peach and pith. Finishes clean and light in the classic, subtle, utilitarian way that a good Rioja rosé should. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.



87 Henry's Drive Vignerons 2009 Morse Code Chardonnay (Padthaway); \$9.

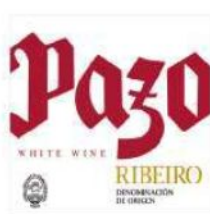
This has all the touchstones of good Chardonnay: just enough body and richness, apple, pineapple and melon fruit flavors and a crisp, citrusy finish. Solid Chardonnay for under \$10. Imported by Quintessential Wines.



87 Maximo 2007 Tempranillo (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla); \$8.

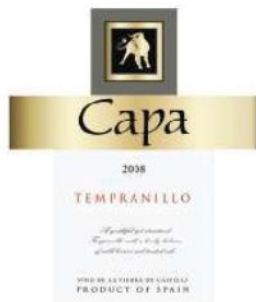
For a value-priced wine this scores well. The nose offers a nice mix of earth, warmth and berry fruit, while the palate is juicy, fresh and tastes of zesty berry. Composed on the finish, which is also fresh and lively. Perfect for by-the-glass or casual consumption. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd.

BESTBUYS



87 Pazo Ribeiro 2008 Ribeiro; \$10.

Chiseled aromas of lemon-lime and spring flowers are lean but clean, and that pretty much describes this blend of Treixadura, Torrontés and Palomino. Lime and green banana are the key flavors, and the finish brings back lemon-lime and minerality. More basic than flashy, but nice in a neutral way.



86 Capa 2008 Tempranillo (Vino de la Tierra de Castilla); \$8.

Roasted and mildly leafy, and then clacky and a bit tannic in the mouth. The fruit flavors are good and mostly pure as they settle on black cherry and blackberry, while the finish is jammy but short. For \$8 this should not disappoint. Imported by Arcadia Imports.



86 Torres 2008 Infinite Tempranillo-Cabernet Sauvignon (Spain); \$10.

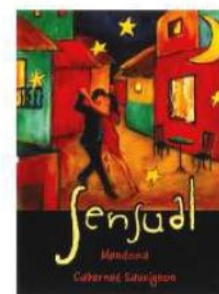
This new wine from the Torres group is a little heavy and baked on the nose, but once you get it onto the palate there's depth, mouthfeel and solid flavors of savory fruit, soy, rubber and dark berry. Dry on the finish, with a mounting note of coffee. Not overly fruity or sweet, which may be a blessing for some palates. Imported by Dreyfus, Ashby & Co.

BESTBUYS



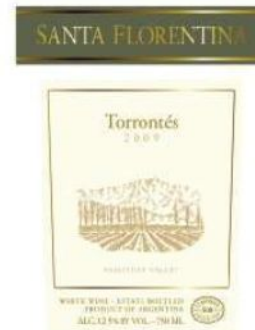
85 Callia 2009 Alta Pinot Grigio (Tulum Valley); \$9.

For Argentine PG it's attractive. The nose is clean but simple, while the palate is fresh and easy, with driving pineapple and lemon flavors being pushed along by good acidity. Juicy and wet on the finish, and overall it ranks as a nice, fruity wash. Imported by Palm Bay International.



85 Valentin Bianchi 2009 Sensual Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendoza); \$10.

This new casual wine from Valentin Bianchi is solid with full berry aromas. The palate is round and a little soft and plump, with prune, fig and blackberry flavors. Sweet and easy throughout, with a mild finish. Nothing out of the ordinary. Imported by Quintessential Wines.



84 Santa Florentina 2009 Torrontés (Famatina Valley); \$8.

A little out there on a limb, with ultra-tropical aromas and limited flavors. It starts out fine in the mouth, and then come basic citrus, sweet pineapple and melon flavors. Tastes a lot like powdered sugar on the finish, but lasting acidity manages to cut through the candied sweetness. Imported by Biagio Cru & Estate Wines, LLC.

BESTBUYS BEER



91 Southampton Keller Pils (Keller Bier; Southampton Publick House, NY); 5.0% abv, \$9/6 pack. This is a new addition to the Southampton lineup that will focus on a single hop variety each release in order to showcase that hop's specific aroma and flavor profiles. This year's hop is the Hallertauer Tradition, a refined hop with delicate aromatics and a fairly assertive flavor profile. Light grassy aromas in the bouquet are supported by fresh sweet citrus, dried wheat and floral hop notes. The mouth is medium weight with a good amount of hop presence as well as cracker, earthy spice and resin notes. The astringent bitter kick leads all the way through the long finish, slowly dissipating. Nice character and complexity for a pils.



90 Trumer Pils (German Pilsener; Trumer Brauerei Berkeley, CA); 4.8% abv, \$9/6 pack. Pours a brilliant golden straw color with a medium head that leaves a little lacing behind. The bouquet offers notes of grass, dried hops and a slight metallic skunkiness. Medium weight and creamy in the mouth with a good amount of sweet malty flavors along with nice notes of peppery spice and orange citrus. The carbonation is assertive but seemingly fine-grained, and the finish closes dry and remarkably clean, leaving you ready for more.

& Jones Wine Merchants. *Cellar Selection.* —M.L.

94 PianCornello 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$70. Here's a beautiful Brunello that offers generous tones of black fruit, plum and cherry that are filled out at the back by solid notes of spice, cola, mesquite wood and cigar box. You'll love the natural density and intensity of this gorgeous wine from Tuscany with sweet tannins and smooth texture. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

94 Podere Brizio 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. Owned by Roberto Bellini and Patrizia Mazzi, Podere Brizio delivers a beautiful Riserva that is generous with plump cherry nuances, dried currants, cedar wood, mesquite, cola, leather and a touch of sweet vanilla. The wine is extremely smooth and silky in the mouth yet it certainly does not lack structure or power. A Marc de Grazia selection; various American importers. *Cellar Selection.* —M.L.

94 Tenuta La Fuga 2004 Le Due Sorelle Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. Here's a dark, well-concentrated Brunello Riserva with notes of spice, chocolate, cola and dark cherry. There's great plumpness and succulence here with a smooth, round feel in the mouth. Pair this beautiful wine with important meat dishes or wild mushrooms: Drink after 2015. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

93 Canalicchio di Sopra 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$120. Here's another superstar Brunello Riserva from the excellent 2004 vintage. The aromas are rich and penetrating and recall cherry liqueur, cola, mesquite, cedar, wet earth and pressed violets. The wine's texture is streamlined and compact with polished tannins. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

93 Caprili 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55. There's a polished mineral note here of lead pencil or graphite that gives this wine very direct and immediate appeal. At the back, you'll notice subtle tones of black fruit, plum, ripe cherry and spice. The wine is concentrated and dense with drying tannins at the close. This beautiful wine can age many more years. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. *Cellar Selection.* —M.L.

93 Fattoria dei Barbi 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90. Pretty notes of Italian espresso, chocolate and spice revolve around a core of solid black fruit. This is an elegant and refined wine that boats a traditional style that is never overdone or too powerful. In fact, it showcases its delicate berry nuances very nicely in the mouth. Drink after 2014. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.L.

93 La Velona 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. This Brunello Riserva promises love at first sight and sip. The wine is thick, penetrating and rich and offers deep layers of sweet blackberry, cherry cola, mesquite wood, leather and discreet toast. It's the fullness and generosity of fruit that will blow you away followed by those vibrant cherry after tones. Imported by Tullio Cerciello Imports. —M.L.

93 Marchesi Antinori 2004 Pian delle Vigne Vignaferruvia Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$125. This excellent vineyard designate Brunello Riserva opens with a very elegant nose that includes elements of spice, toast, black fruit and dusty mineral. In fact, that pretty mineral note is what defines the wine and gives it harmony and personality. The wine is full and dense in the mouth with succulent tannins that need to soften with a little more cellar aging. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —M.L.

93 Tenuta Poggio il Castellare 2004 Pian Bossolino Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80. The wine's appearance perfectly fits what you dream of in Brunello Riserva, and so do its aromas. It opens with dark ruby concentration and intense aromas of black cherry, currants, wet earth and smoked bacon. In the mouth, this gorgeous wine is soft, supple and long lasting. Drink now or hold five more years. Imported by Margate Wine & Spirit Company. —M.L.

93 Tenuta Vitanza 2004 Tradizione Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$83. Here's a beautifully evolved Brunello Riserva with notes of cherry, cola and spice backed by dark and penetrating notes of blackberry, plum and tar. This wine delivers thick, solid aromas and a bold, succulent style with smooth softness and intensity in the mouth. Very nice. Imported by Vintners Estate Direct Importing. —M.L.

93 Tornesi 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. This is a gorgeous wine with impressive intensity and balance. Aro-

mas include black cherry, dried currants, candied fruit, leather, tar and a touch of powdered licorice. There are earthy and mineral tones as well and the wine shows the high levels of richness and complexity that can be achieved with Sangiovese Grosso. Imported by Fourcade & Hecht Wine Selections. —M.L.

92 Casisano Colombaio 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

This Brunello Riserva opens with a saturated garnet color and segues to aromas of blackberry, cherry, dried currants, leather, tar and Indian spice. There's a very nice juicy or chewy quality to the mouthfeel that gives the wine succulence and substance. Imported by Laird & Company. —M.L.

92 Ferrero 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$70.

Executed by vintner Claudia Ferrero, this remarkable Brunello Riserva shows enormous intensity and staying power. The wine's genuine aromas include wet earth, dried forest berry, leather, pipe tobacco and smoked bacon. The mouthfeel is rich and determined with polished tannins. Imported by Bacchanal Wines. —M.L.

92 Le Gode 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

Here's a subdued and elegant Brunello Riserva that plays its best cards on the quality of its aromas. There are fine and pristine notes here of forest berry, white cherry, cola and mesquite. The wine is soft and succulent with smooth, silky tannins. Imported by Conexport. —M.L.

92 Podere La Vigna 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

Here's a dark and brooding Brunello Riserva with modern tones of succulent fruit backed by sophisticated notes of spice, toast, chocolate and cola. This is definitely a bigger style with a bold and determined approach that also offers elegance and harmony. Imported by Vitis Imports. —M.L.

92 Tenuta Friggiali 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

This is a fine Brunello Riserva with a thick and pulpy feel that is accented by aromas of cherry, wild berries, currants, exotic spice and pipe tobacco. The wine is smooth and rich with enduring fruit notes and silky tannins. There is a pleasantly sweet note of cherry and vanilla on the long finish. Drink after 2012. Imported by Soilair Selection. —M.L.

92 Terralsole 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$74.

Here's a thick and opulent Brunello Riserva with a pleasurable and forward style that puts emphasis on intensity, quality of fruit and texture. The wine boasts a dark garnet color with aromas that span from exotic spice to pressed flowers. It needs at least five more years of cellar aging because the tannins are still a bit young. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —M.L.

91 Innocenti 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

Here's a feminine and deeply floral expression of Sangiovese Grosso with background notes of wet earth, violets, rose petal, currants and a smoky touch of mesquite wood. In the mouth, the wine shows excellent power and concentration. We suggest a pairing with rabbit or magret de canard. Imported by Mission Wine Company. —M.L.

91 Capanna 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$90.

Here's a Brunello Riserva with a delicate, feminine nose that recalls elements of forest fruit, pressed violets, cherry cola and dried herbs. The wine is determined, linear and powerful in the mouth with tight tannins and a polished, slightly bitter finish. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

91 Piccini 2004 Villa al Cortile Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60.

This is a harmonious and attractive Brunello Riserva with elegant tones of spice, cola, black stone and forest fruit. The wine has excellent texture and consistency and fills your mouth with bright berry tones. Piccini is an important name in Chianti Classico and has recently added hearty Brunello to its portfolio. Imported by Aveniu Brands, Inc.. —M.L.

91 Ventolaio di Fanti Luigi 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$65.

There are interesting aromas here of cherry, chocolate, rhubarb, cola, wet earth, forest floor and dried violets that make this Brunello Riserva a bit out of the ordinary. In fact, it's loaded with personality and charm and its mouthfeel is sharp, tonic and raw with a decisive root beer or balsam like finish. Imported by Puglia inc.. —M.L.

91 Verbena 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$40.

The Verbena Brunello Riserva is a serious and austere wine with sophisticated notes of mature fruit, spice, cedar wood, leather and tar. There's good density

and weight here to pair with grilled meat. The wine offers sweet, chewy tannins over dense texture. Drink after 2015. Imported by Solstars Inc.. —M.L.

91 Villa Poggio Salvi 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80.

Poggio Salvi's Brunello Riserva offers genuine and linear fruit tones with bright berry and cherry layers lavished over spice and leather. The wine is tonic and tight in the mouth with lingering notes of spice and smoke on the close. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. —M.L.

88 Vasco Sassetti 2004 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

This is a ripe and plump Brunello Riserva with distant notes of band aid or wet fur that don't distract too much from the overall picture. You'll also get aromas of wet earth, wild mushroom and pressed flowers and the wine's intensity and general consistency is very nice. Imported by Franco Wine Imports. —M.L.

BRUNELLO

94 San Polino 2005 Helichrysum (Brunello di Montalcino); \$55.

Soft, plush and modern, this is a superstar Brunello with all the qualities we love in this gorgeous category of wine. Made from organically farmed fruit, it offers amazing intensity and determination with aromas of spice, blackberry and currants. The texture is smooth and silky and the tannins offer a solid backbone. Imported by Premier Wine Co. **Cellar Selection.** —M.L.

93 Castiglion del Bosco 2005 Campo del Drago (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA.

Here is a sweet, plump and succulent Brunello with bright notes of cherry, blackberry, spice, leather and a touch of dark chocolate. The wine is extra soft and smooth in the mouth and those bright cherry flavors last a long time on the finish. The tannins are polished and dry. Drink after 2014. Imported by USA Wine West. —M.L.

93 Corte Pavone 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$48.

Executed in a plush modern style, this opulent Brunello offers tones of black chocolate, espresso, toast, cherry and leather. The wine's appearance is dense and dark and there's power and determination on the close. It's also slightly sweet and very succulent

with enduring flavors of plump cherry. Drink after 2015. Imported by Hey Day Corporation. **Editors' Choice.** —M.L.

93 Donatella Cinelli Colombini 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$70. Here is a thick and succulent expression of Brunello di Montalcino with a generous and immediately friendly disposition. The wine is soft, smooth and satisfying with firm tannins and a full delivery of blackberry, cherry and spice. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

93 Donatella Cinelli Colombini 2005 Prime Donne (Brunello di Montalcino); \$80. Cinelli Colombini's Prime Donne Brunello offers generous and succulent characteristics followed by integrated aromas of blackberry, ripe cherry, mesquite wood, exotic spice, tobacco and chocolate powder. The wine is smooth and rich with a slight hint of sweetness that translates into vanilla and coffee flavors on the close. Drink after 2014. Imported by Banville & Jones Wine Merchants. —M.L.

93 La Cerbaiola 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$175. This is a gorgeous Brunello with thick and succulent aromas of black fruit, spice, cedar wood, leather and pipe tobacco. It offers a lot of in terms of complexity and intensity but is never overdone or exaggerated. In the mouth, it fills the palate with beautifully bright cherry flavors. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

93 La Fiorita 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60. Here's a plump, ripe and round Brunello with bright berry tones followed by mesquite wood, cedar, pipe tobacco and leather. All together, this is a full and generous wine with impressive longevity on the palate. Pair it with pork, lamb or beef. Imported by Chambers & Chambers. —M.L.

93 La Mannella 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55. Here is a rich and dense style of Brunello with bright berry tones and ripe cherry followed by cedar, cola and spice. The wine is rich and opulent in the mouth with great intensity, soft tannins and well integrated

acidity. La Mannella really steps forward in terms of quality with this vintage. Imported by Tutto Vino. —M.L.

93 Pinino 2005 Clandestino (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. Here's another wonderful Brunello from Montalcino. This wine offers intensity and purity of aromas along with loads of cherry, vanilla and spice. There's elegance and harmony here and the wine is not overdone or exaggerated. In fact, the overall effect is that of sophistication and drinkability. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

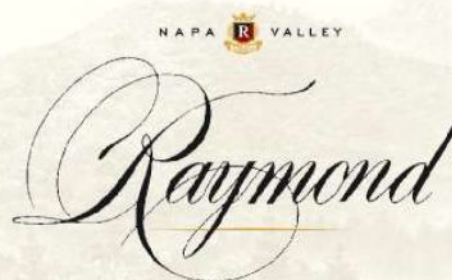
93 Poggiarellino 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. This is a blockbuster Brunello that delivers pleasure and intensity on multiple levels. The aromas are deep and penetrating with an emphasis on cherry, forest berry, pressed violets, cola and balsam notes. The delivery is direct and generous and the mouthfeel boasts excellent length, density and persistency. The tannins are still tight. Wait a few more years



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to drink it. Imported by Premier Wine Co. ***Cellar Selection.*** —M.L.

93 Valdicava 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Plush and modern, plump and decadent: this is a blockbuster Brunello with huge concentration, density and intensity especially where those oak-related aromas are concerned. Yes, you get loads of spice and mesquite wood here but the natural intensity of the cherry and blackberry is not overwhelmed. The wine is soft, chewy and dense in the mouth. Drink after 2014. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

92 Biondi-Santi Tenuta Greppo 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. The main aspect that sets Biondi-Santi apart is the delicate nature of its aromas. This is an elegant and feminine Brunello with bright berry nuances, floral notes, wild cherry and cola tones. There are subtle hints of vanilla and spice in the mouth with bright acidity. The 2005 vintage should hold another 10–15 years. Imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers. ***Cellar Selection.*** —M.L.

92 Camigliano 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$55. Tobacco leaf, new leather, forest floor and blackberry open the nose of this nicely ruby-colored Brunello di Montalcino. This wine delivers aromas of cedar wood, vanilla seed, black fruit and exotic spice. In the mouth, it is bright and tonic with sweet oak or cherry fruit flavors on the close. It's almost ready to drink now. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.L.

92 Caprili 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$35. Austere and brooding, here is a bigger style Brunello with opulence and loads of charm. The wine is intense and bright with aromas of black fruit, spice, toast, forest floor, cedar and cherry cola. The feeling it imparts is one of succulence, firmness and density. Drink after 2014. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

92 Castello Romitorio 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Meaty characteristics of cured meat and bresaola open the nose of this vibrant, ruby-colored Brunello di Montalcino. You'll also get hints of wet earth, pressed violets and exotic spice. The wine's texture is smooth and soft and this food-friendly wine will be perfectly ready to drink in a few more years. Imported by Vinifera Imports. —M.L.

92 Castiglion del Bosco 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. A sweet note of vanilla and cinnamon emerges at first and is soon followed by cherry, coffee and leather. The wine is both soft and silky thanks to its cherry and bright fruit nuances. It also offers zesty freshness on the close. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 Citille di Sopra 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. This is a gorgeous wine with loads of intensity and fruit. You can expect the wine to age many years in the cellar thanks to the integrity of the cherry, blackberry and plum flavors. In the mouth, the wine is soft, round and smooth although the tannins could use a few more years to soften. Imported by Siena Imports. —M.L.

92 Collosorbo 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$50. Here's a gorgeous expression of Brunello di Montalcino with territory-driven notes of wet earth, forest floor, cherry and minty balsam-like overtones. The wine boasts a thick, chewy texture with sweet berry flavors and loads of intensity and spicy persistency on the close. Imported by Frank Johnson Selections. —M.L.

92 Le Ragnaie 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$30. Well balanced and well priced, this beautifully balanced Brunello by vintner Riccardo Campinoti offers tones of cherry, forest bush, cola, exotic spice and black licorice. It has a naturally meaty or succulent nature, yet it also speaks of Montalcino tradition. Drink after 2013 to allow the tannins to soften and the oak notes to fully integrate. Imported by Vine Street Imports. ***Editors' Choice.*** —M.L.

92 Pinino 2005 Cupio (Brunello di Montalcino); \$NA. This bright Brunello opens with a medley of aromas that span from vanilla bean to Spanish cedar to cherry cola and blackberry. You'll love the harmony, intensity and immediate nature of the delivery. In the mouth, the wine is soft, structured and persistent. Imported by USA Wine Imports. —M.L.

92 San Polino 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40. This is one of those immediate and generous Brunellos that will impress everyone who drinks it. Yet, it is by no means overdone: it delivers harmony and territory-driven aromas of cherry, violets, vanilla and wet earth. The mouthfeel is bright, tonic and

vibrant with loads of cherry on the close. Imported by Premier Wine Co. —M.L.

92 Tenuta La Fuga 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. This is a bright and generous Brunello that will appeal to those who prefer succulent and meaty characteristics in their wines. There are notes here of red cherry, wet earth, toasted wood, black plum and even some green spice. The concentration is thick and dense. Sweet, chewy tannins appear on the finish. Imported by Kobrand. —M.L.

91 Bellaria 2005 Assunto (Brunello di Montalcino); \$60. Here's a gorgeous, and in no way overdone Brunello, with pretty notes of black fruit, Spanish cedar, cola, black spice and tea leaf. The aromas are direct, penetrating and inviting. The mouthfeel is sharp and powerful with good integration of tannins and acidity. Drink after 2013. Imported by Terra Verus Trading Co. LP. —M.L.

91 Fattoria dei Barbi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$45. Fattoria dei Barbi's 2005 Brunello opens with a ripe, saturated ruby color and thick aromas of black cherry, tobacco, leather and a playful touch of exotic spice. The wine needs time to integrate and another three years of cellar aging should do the trick. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —M.L.

91 La Velona 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Here is an elegant Brunello that is clearly shaped by tradition and territory. The wine has a clean nose with tones of forest fruit, cherry, spice and cola. You can taste characteristics often associated with Sangiovese Grosso, such as wet earth and pressed violets. It also has good acidity and a firm but not overdone structure. Imported by Tullio Cerciello Imports. —M.L.

91 Marchesi Antinori 2005 Pian delle Vigne (Brunello di Montalcino); \$75. Pian delle Vigne comes from vineyards planted in lower lands compared to many other Montalcino crus. This results in slightly higher temperatures during the growing season and thicker, sweeter wines. What it loses in complexity it gains in generous tones of sweet cherry, chocolate and spice. The wine's texture is round, rich and opulent. Imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. —M.L.

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYING GUIDE

91 Querce Bettina 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$75. This is an elegant and traditional Brunello with bright fruit notes including wild berries, cherry, plum and red currants. There's also a bit of underbrush here or wild mushroom that makes for a nice touch. The wine is smooth and polished in the mouth with a touch of sweet berry on the close. Imported by Jan D'Amore Wines. —M.L.

91 Sesta di Sopra 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Here's a dense, dark Brunello with aromas of moist soil, forest floor, exotic spice and tones of black fruit, prune, plum and currant. These notes are well integrated and the mouthfeel is austere, solid and dense. Pair this wine with grilled red meat or pasta with meat sauce. Imported by Premier Wine Co. —M.L.

91 Tenuta Vitanza 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$43. Here's a thick and densely concentrated Brunello with layers of soft spice, mature fruit, blackberry, leather and a touch of black licorice. The wine is extremely rich and opulent in the mouth and delivers excellent concentration and body. It fills the mouth nicely with its delicious fruit tones. Imported by Vintners Estate Direct Importing. —M.L.

91 Tornesi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. There is a woody or brambly quality to this Brunello that will remind you of forest brush and wild berries. You'll also get tones of mesquite wood, root beer, licorice and very enticing balsam notes that create a sharp and immediate quality to the overall delivery. This is a different Brunello with its own character, personality and unique intensity. Imported by Fourcade & Hecht Wine Selections. —M.L.

90 Capanna 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$60. This is a very likeable and approachable Brunello with soft but generous tones of cherry fruit, exotic spice, pipe tobacco and cedar wood. In fact, those exotic wood notes transfer to the mouth where the wine is smooth and enduring with a sweet cherry finale. Imported by Villa Italia. —M.L.

90 Castello Tricerchi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Here's a beautifully evolved Brunello di Montalcino (from Agricoltori del Geografico) that shows both elegance and harmony within layers of fruit, spice and earth. The wine articulates many of the most pleasurable

characteristics associated with Sangiovese Grosso: elegance and liveliness. Imported by Monarchia Matt International. —M.L.

90 Molino di Sant'Antimo 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. This Brunello has an edgy, raw feel that translates into aromas of white cherry, wild raspberries and violets. It's a streamlined and traditional wine with a vibrant, buoyant personality topped by sharp acidity and firm tannins. Pair it with creamy or cheesy dishes. Imported by Selected Estates of Europe Ltd. —M.L.

90 Sesti 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Although this Brunello is from the newly released 2005 vintage, it has aromas and textures that remind you of a wine that is older still. There are sophisticated undertones here of smoke and licorice that peep up from behind candied fruit and black currants. There are also nicely integrated tones of exotic spice and mesquite wood at the back. Imported by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant. —M.L.

90 Verbena 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$40. This Brunello has evolved nicely since the 2005 harvest and shows sophisticated aromas of dried fruit, pressed flowers, black licorice, road tar and a touch of white pepper. There's great intensity and harmony here and the wine fills your palate with generous fruit flavors and silky tannins. It's ready to drink now. Imported by Solstars Inc. —M.L.

89 Collelcto 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. This is a fine, elegant and linear Brunello di Montalcino with pristine and somewhat sharp aromas of spice, cedar, balsam and cherry cola. The wine is immediate and direct and imparts both polished tannins and enough natural crispness to keep the palate refreshed even when paired with red meat. Imported by Montecastelli Selections. —M.L.

89 Podere La Vigna 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$NA. Here's a thick and concentrated Brunello with meaty aromas of smoked bacon and air-dried beef. The fruit notes are on the mature, jammy side and there's also a hint of wet earth or white mushroom that is typical of Sangiovese Grosso in warmer vintages like 2005. It delivers gritty, raw tannins that need a few years to unwind. Imported by Vitis Imports. —M.L.

The Buying Guide includes ratings and reviews of new releases and selected older wines evaluated by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine's* editors and other qualified tasters. On a regular basis the Buying Guide includes reports on special tastings and the wines of specific producers. Regular contributors to our Buying Guide include Senior Editor/ Tasting Director Joe Czerwinski, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo, Executive Editor Susan Kostrzewa, Contributing Editor Michael Schachner and Contributing Reviewer Jean Reilly in New York, European Editor Roger Voss in Bordeaux, Italian Editor Monica Larner in Rome, Contributing Editor Steve Heimoff in Oakland and Contributing Editor Paul Gregutt in Seattle. If a wine was evaluated by a single reviewer, that taster's initials appear following the note. When no initials appear, the wine was evaluated by two or more reviewers and the score and tasting note reflect the input of all tasters.

Each review contains a score, the full name of the wine, its suggested national retail price, and a tasting note. If price cannot be confirmed, \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for 750-ml bottles unless otherwise indicated.

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Tastings are conducted individually or in a group setting and performed blind or in accordance with accepted industry practices. Price is not a factor in assigning scores. When possible, wines considered flawed or uncustomary are retasted.

ABOUT THE SCORES

Ratings reflect what our editors felt about a particular wine. Beyond the rating, we encourage you to read the accompanying tasting note to learn about a wine's special characteristics.

- Classic 98–100:** The pinnacle of quality.
- Superb 94–97:** A great achievement.
- Excellent 90–93:** Highly recommended.
- Very Good 87–89:** Often good value; well recommended.
- Good 83–86:** Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
- Acceptable 80–82:** Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Wines receiving a rating below 80 are not reviewed.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

Editors' Choice wines are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a wine at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.

Cellar Selections are wines deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential. A Cellar Selection designation does not mean that a wine must be stored to be enjoyed, but that cellaring will probably result in a more enjoyable bottle. In general, an optimum time for cellaring will be indicated.

Best Buys are wines that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. There are no specific guidelines or formulae for determining Best Buys, but they are generally priced at \$15 or less.

SUBMITTING WINES FOR REVIEW

Wines should be submitted to the appropriate reviewing location as detailed in our FAQ, available online via winemag.com/contact. Inquiries should be addressed to Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo at 914.345.8463 or email tastings@wineenthusiast.net. **There is no charge for submitting wines.** We make every effort to taste all wines submitted for review, but there is no guarantee that all wines submitted will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. All wines must be accompanied by a submission form, which may be downloaded from our Web site.

LABELS

Labels are paid promotions. Wineries and winery representatives are given the opportunity to submit labels, which are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza at 813.571.1122; fax 866.896.8786; or email dvalenza@wineenthusiast.net.

Find all reviews on our fully searchable database at buyingguide.winemag.com

89 Terrasole 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$65. Here's a Brunello that opens with notes of black fruit, forest berry, cherry cola and exotic spice. This is a harmonious and traditional wine that reflects many of the elegant characteristics of the beautiful Tuscan territory that shaped it. Imported by Stacole Fine Wines. —M.L.

89 Ventolaio di Fanti Luigi 2005 Brunello di Montalcino; \$45. Here is a modern Brunello with an obvious wood or oak-related element that sits on top of blackberry, mature cherry, raspberry and cola. It's a plush, dense and modern wine with loads of mature berry fruit and lingering tones of smoke and spice. Imported by Puglia Inc. —M.L.

LOIRE WHITE WINES

SAUVIGNON BLANC

94 Henri Bourgeois 2008 Le M.D. de Bourgeois (Sancerre); \$36. The initials refer to the vineyard of Mont Damné, the steepest vineyard in Sancerre. The wine reflects the stony character of the soil, coming through with great intensity. It is powerful, flinty, with a biting citrus character, deliciously taut and intense. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Les Chailoux (Sancerre); \$23. The name, referring to the flinty soil of the vineyard, says it all. It is a mineral wine that tastes of stony soil, flint and chalk. It has a great core of hardened steel, very firm, surrounded by intense green fruits, filled with apple juice and grapefruit flavors. For aging over 2–3 years. Imported by Garber and Co. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

93 Domaine Masson-Blondelet 2008 Villa Paulus (Pouilly-Fumé); \$18. Villa Paulus, a reference to the Roman origins of Pouilly-sur-Loire, is an impressive wine. It has power, a rich feel, finely textured with big ripe yellow fruits, powered by a steely core. Age for 2–3 years. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

93 Domaine Vacheron 2008 Les Romains (Sancerre); \$NA. The name

of the wine, the Romans, reminds us that Sancerre was once a Roman hilltop stronghold. The wine is crisply, tautly mineral, a pure expression of citrus and grapefruit flavors, an intense, beautifully executed wine. Worth aging for 2–3 years. Imported by North Berkeley Imports. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

92 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Les Romains (Sancerre); \$23. A rounded wine, very green and opulent. Like many of the Fouassier wines, this needs time to breathe, as it gradually begins to show its intense currant, star fruit and green herbal character. Then the steel core comes through with a great burst of final acidity. Imported by Wirtz Beverage. —R.V.

92 Domaine Thomas & Fils 2008 Ultimus (Sancerre); \$NA. The name, and the weight of the bottle are almost self-explanatory. The wine is soft because it is so rich, the ripe fruit mainly into the yellow and tropical fruit realm, although with a biting edge to it. It is powerful, intense and concentrated. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

92 Fournier Père et Fils 2008 Cuvée Silex (Sancerre); \$40. Silex is the French name for the flint over limestone soil that occurs in the Sancerre and Pouilly regions. There is a definite character of tight texture in this wine, very mineral while it also has ripe fruit. This is a new wine from Fournier, an impressive addition to the range. Imported by David Milligan Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

92 Henri Bourgeois 2008 Domaine Gérard Fiou (Sancerre); \$22. An intensely mineral expression of Sauvignon Blanc, crisp, full of citrus flavors, deliciously fresh, but also complex. The wine is concentrated into a steel spring of ripeness, ready to burst from the glass. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —R.V.

92 Henri Bourgeois 2008 La Demoiselle de Bourgeois (Pouilly-Fumé); \$38. The clay soil of Pouilly gives extra richness to this wine, a creamy texture supporting pear and green plum fruits, with a delicious crushed herb aroma. It is powerful, very concentrated, needing 4–5 years aging. Imported by Ideal Wine and Spirits Co. Inc. —R.V.

92 Roger et Didier Rimbault 2007 Vieilles Vignes (Sancerre); \$NA. A

fine, concentrated, mineral-textured wine, with pink grapefruit and lemon zest flavors. It is vivid, fresh, layered with crisp acidity that blooms in the mouth. There is a great, taut aftertaste. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

92 Vincent Delaporte 2008 Chavignol (Sancerre); \$30. A brilliant wine, shining with bright fruits, fresh and crisp. The fact that it also has weight gives it an extra intensity of herbaceous flavors, lifted by green peas. There is a definite steely edge to the finish. Imported by Vineyard Brands. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

91 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Clos Paradis (Sancerre); \$23. Made from old vines in a single vineyard, very intense even in its youth. It has a smooth, creamy texture over a core of flint and herbaceousness. It gradually builds, offering green and white fruits and vibrant acidity. This is a beautiful wine. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

91 Domaine Henry Pellé 2008 Les Blanchais (Menetou-Salon); \$NA. The richest wine in the Pellé range, full of super-ripe fruits with great maturity. The wine concentrates on mango and pineapple along with some fine, linear citrus acidity. Worth aging for 1–2 years. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.

91 Domaine Thomas & Fils 2008 Grand'Chaille (Sancerre); \$NA. A concentrated, rich wine, packed with peach and pear flavors, the freshness coming from ripe apples and green plums. While the fruit dominates, there is always a good edge of minerality, tightening the wine, giving it a taut, crisp aftertaste. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

91 Domaine Vacheron 2008 Sancerre; \$NA. Intensely herbaceous aromas are followed by crisp herb and green fruit flavors. There is an extra element of balanced richness from the peach juice ripeness, while the wine is suffused with a great sweet apple skin texture. Imported by North Berkeley Imports. —R.V.

91 Fournier Père et Fils 2007 La Chaudouillonne Grande Cuvée (Sancerre); \$33. With the extra year of maturity, this is turning into a toast and spice wine, with the citrus fruit now softening into ripe

apples and peaches. The acidity remains, giving a satisfactory jolt of final freshness. The wine's name means girl from Chaudoux, a small village near Sancerre. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

91 Guy Saget 2008 Le Domaine Saget (Pouilly-Fumé); \$32. A full, ripe wine, with delicious white plum, sweet grapefruit and a tense mineral edge. There is a great texture from fruit tannins, boosted by intense shots of acidity. Age for another year or two. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —R.V.

90 Domaine Cherrier et Fils 2008 Sancerre; \$NA. A wine on the crisp, mineral side, bringing out some flintiness while also showing pear juice fruit flavors. There is a strong texture here, leaving a final tight acidity. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —R.V.

90 Domaine Henry Pellé 2008 Vignes de Ratier (Menetou-Salon); \$NA. A wine with some weight, but also fresh, clean and crisp fruit. The Pellé style is for very ripe grapes, expressing richness as well as the terroir. Here the mineral edge is present, along with tangy flavors, but finishing much richer. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

90 Domaine Masson-Blondelet 2008 Thauvenay (Sancerre); \$24. A big, rich style of Sancerre, but one that doesn't forget its mineral, flinty roots. The acidity has an edge of sweetness, opened by delicious berry fruit flavors, tangy in its citrus freshness. It could age for another 1–2 years. Imported by Grape Expectations (CA). —R.V.

90 Domaine Thomas & Fils 2008 La Crêpe (Sancerre); \$NA. Fresh and creamy in texture, a wine that shows its intensity slowly. It gradually develops a taut, vibrant apple skin and steel texture, very crisp, always bringing out flint and minerality. Age for two years at least. Imported by Robert Kacher Imports. —R.V.

90 Fournier Père et Fils 2008 Les Cailottes (Pouilly-Fumé); \$27. This wine has a smoky character with aromas of wood smoke and autumnal apple orchards. The flavors are packed with herbs, very intense, needing 2–3 years to soften. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

90 Guy Saget 2008 Domaine de la Perrière (Sancerre); \$25. Green pear and quince flavors are found on a wine that has some richness. It is easy and soft initially, then a firm texture and the freshest acidity come through. But finally, it return to a rich character. Imported by Pasternak Wine Imports. —R.V.

90 Joseph Mellot 2008 Domaine des Mariniers (Pouilly-Fumé); \$20. A single estate run by Joseph Mellot, this produces an impressive ripe style of Sauvignon Blanc, at this stage youthful with exuberant white fruits and grapefruit, and an obvious need to age for 1–2 years. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

90 Langlois-Chateau 2008 Château de Fontaine-Audon (Sancerre); \$NA. Weighty Sauvignon Blanc, going for tropical flavors, very ripe yellow fruits and sweet acidity. The wine is rich, concentrated, keeping a mineral edge, showing some of the intensity of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. A delicious, ripe wine. Imported by Terlato Wines International. —R.V.

90 Michel Redde 2007 La Moynerie (Pouilly-Fumé); \$NA. La Moynerie is the name of the Michel Redde winery, surrounded by the vineyards of Pouilly. This is a ripe, full-bodied wine boasting ripe green plums to go with the grapefruit zest acidity. There is a firm, tangy texture, bringing the wine to a long, crisp finish. Imported by Kobrand. —R.V.

89 De Ladoucette 2006 Pouilly-Fumé; \$NA. With almost four years aging, this wine has developed a softer, nutty quality, while retaining good freshness. It is relatively light in character, a fine mix of green fruits, a more mature almond paste flavor and a fine, tangy edge. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

89 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Les Chasseignes (Sancerre); \$23. Light, almost delicate wine, offering freshness, green fruits and a fine tangy texture. The citrus is prominent, but the wine as a whole is easy, fresh, developing quickly, touched finally with caramel. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. —R.V.

STARMONT
NAPA VALLEY

2007 Chardonnay
91 Points
Wine Enthusiast Magazine

2008 Chardonnay
90 Points
Wine Spectator Magazine

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89 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Les Grands Groux (Sancerre); \$22. Taut wine, showing very mineral character, steely and crisp, the intensity building as it opens up. It has a vivid citrus character, finishing with bright but not weighty acidity. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. —R.V.

89 Fournier Père et Fils 2008 Les Belles Vignes (Sancerre); \$27. An edgy, mineral style, full in the mouth, with fruit flavors that definitely go towards pear and apricot and away from herbaceous. It's a great style that allows the wine to age, with a firm texture to go with the fruit. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

89 Fournier Père et Fils 2006 Grand Cuvée Fournier (Pouilly-Fumé); \$33. Smooth, softly textured, going for the creamy side of Sauvignon Blanc. The wine has weight, flavors of toast and spice as well as ripe pink grapefruit. It is approaching maturity, but could age for another year. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

89 Patient Cottat 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Sancerre); \$27. A rich wine, with a precise texture that offers layers of acidity. The fruit flavors are likely to open out this year, already hinting at peach juice richness. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —R.V.

89 Roger et Didier Rimbault 2008 Sancerre; \$NA. A wine that goes straight into currants along with more exotic fruit like mango. That makes it rich in taste, as well as soft in texture. The acidity is there, but seems almost incidental, lost in the vivid fruits. Imported by T. Edward Wines Ltd. —R.V.

88 De Ladoucette 2008 La Poussie (Sancerre); \$NA. The vineyard of La Poussie, perhaps the most famous in Sancerre, occupies a magnificent amphitheater in the village of Bué. The wine is creamily herbaceous with the tightest green plum flavors and intensity. It has weight, very textured, and could be aged for 2–3 years. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —R.V.

88 Domaine des Berthiers 2008 Pouilly-Fumé; \$26. Classic ripe apples and pear fruits with a healthy serving of acidity, this is concentrated with a strong element of min-

erality. It has fine weight and richness. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —R.V.

88 Domaine Fouassier 2008 Sur le Fort (Sancerre); \$22. A soft, ripe, creamy style that then tightens up with a strong herbaceous currant fruit flavor. It is intense, rich and concentrated, lemon and fresh white peaches combining easily. Imported by Bayfield Importing Ltd. —R.V.

88 Domaine Henry Pellé 2008 Morogues (Menetou-Salon); \$NA. The style is crisp, with apples and grapefruit, followed by a light touch of caramel. The wine is taut, treading the high wire of tense acidity, but it also has a vivid final mineral and apple skin texture. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

88 Domaine Lecomte 2008 Vieilles Vignes (Quincy); \$NA. Packed in a single serve screwcap glass tube, here is a rich and delicious wine, with just that extra warmth that the Quincy appellation brings to Sauvignon Blanc. With the concentration of old vines, this is a fine, broad-textured wine, with finishing acidity. Imported by JF Wine Imports. —R.V.

88 Henry Natter 2008 Sancerre; \$29. Caramel and toast aromas lead to a wine where wood is, surprisingly for Sancerre, an important element. It has weight, a creamy texture, suggestions of mellow peaches, soft and ripe. Imported by Vintage '59 Imports. —R.V.

88 Joseph Mellot 2008 La Chatellenie (Sancerre); \$25. A smooth creamy textured wine, the fruit flavors softened by ripeness and an edge that is just sweet. Good acidity gives it a fresh streak, the flavors of white currants, green plums and grapefruit coming out of a smoky edge. Screwcap. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

88 Joseph Mellot 2008 Le Tronsec (Pouilly-Fumé); \$20. Fine ripe fruit here, with plenty of sweet apple and pear flavors. The wine is ripe, soft, open, maybe lacking concentration but with a great tangy herbaceous character. Screwcap. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

88 Michel Redde 2007 Les Tuilières (Sancerre); \$NA. A soft wine, now ready to drink with any herbaceous element toned down. It has freshness still, flavors of tangy

orange and a considerable final acidity. Imported by Kobrand. —R.V.

87 Fournier Père et Fils 2008 La Char-nivolle (Menetou-Salon); \$23. Very soft, ripe grapefruit and kumquat flavors, lifted by acidity. The wine is broad, full in the mouth, crispness well integrated. Great final fruit. Imported by David Milligan Selections. —R.V.

86 Domaine Henry Pellé 2008 Les Bornés (Menetou-Salon); \$NA. Showing pure tropical fruits with a squeeze of lemon, this is a ripe, tasty wine, maybe a little short on acidity, but bringing out ripe lychee and mango flavors. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

85 Barton & Guestier 2008 Origine Sauvignon Blanc (Vin de Pays du Val de Loire); \$NA. Made from organically grown grapes, this is a new wine from Barton & Guestier, a fresh, very herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc. It is bright with pear and green fruits to go with a big twist of lemon. Screwcap. Imported by Diageo Chateau & Estates. —R.V.

85 Domaine Lecomte 2008 Quincy; \$NA. A single glass serving in a glass tube, this is a soft wine, with a warm feel to it, offering some yeasty character as well as ripe quince and pear flavors. Imported by JF Wine Imports. —R.V.

85 Joseph Mellot 2008 La Montarlet (Sancerre); \$20. Strong currant aromas, soft in texture with hints of caramel and toast as well as a more steely texture. The wine is fresh, light, deliciously ready to drink. Screwcap. Imported by Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —R.V.

CHENIN BLANC

90 Manoir de la Tête Rouge 2007 Chapitre 9 (Saumur); \$25. The Chenin Blanc shines here, with its smooth, creamy texture, hints of almonds, pears and an edge of firm texture. Acidity is balanced, a fine touch to finish a delicious wine. Imported by Bourgeois Family Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —R.V.

86 Couly-Dutheil 2008 Les Chanteaux (Chinon); \$24. With its creamy, fresh pear aromas and soft fresh fruits, this is a deli-

cious wine, ready to drink, showing sweet quince and lime flavors. There is a great final acidity. Imported by Frank-Lin International. —R.V.

82 Barton & Guestier 2008 Vouvray; SNA. Fresh Vouvray, but from that ill-defined, in-between, medium-dry category. It offers currant flavors, some texture, but never really shows great flavor or character. Imported by Diageo Chateau & Estates. —R.V.

SPAIN WHITE WINES

RÍAS BAIXAS

89 Viña Almirante 2008 Pionero Macerato Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$15. Aromas of apple, fresh hay, pineapple and natural vanilla draw you in, while the palate is lively and fresh, with citrus, pineapple and pithy lemon flavors. Juicy, clean and zesty on the finish, and chis-

eled in terms of structure and acidity. Very nice Albariño for the price. Imported by Spanish Wine Imports, LLC. —M.S.

88 Licia 2008 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$14. Tropical smelling, with green banana, minerality and firmness to the bouquet. The palate is clean and cleansing, which are two very different things, while the wine tastes of tangy citrus and green melon. Fresh, tropical and uncomplicated. Drink this year. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

87 Paco & Lola 2008 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$20. A clean, easygoing style of Albariño with salinic aromas along with apple and peach. The palate has a perfectly good feel to it, while the flavors of citrus and peach are a little plump and sweet. Finishes with tropical notes and pithy white grapefruit. Imported by Jackson Family Wines. —M.S.

87 Valmiñor 2009 Albariño (Rías Baixas); \$20. More tan in color than

the usual light yellow, with true aromas of flower blossoms, lemon and tropical fruits. The acidity is a bit pronounced and scouring, but that only means that the citrus and green apple flavors cut and cleanse. Juicy but modest when it comes to depth of flavor. Drink now. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

RUEDA

89 Palacio de Bornos 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); \$15. A well-made and refreshing wine for the price. The nose is crisp and smells of nettles, grapefruit, cilantro and stony minerals, while the feel is zesty and the flavors bring a mix of green fruits, citrus and tropicality. Stays on point from start to finish. A fine wine for summer sipping. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

87 Agricola Castellana 2009 Azumbre Viñedos Centenarios Verdejo (Rueda); \$18. Nice and prickly, with aromas of



DA VINCI. Pinot Grigio A MODERN CLASSIC

Da Vinci Pinot Grigio features floral aromas with ripe flavors of fresh apple, citrus and tropical fruit. This crisp Pinot Grigio finishes with notes of minerals and a lively acidity.

Da Vinci Pinot Grigio is sourced primarily from the Trentino-Alto Adige region. This high altitude region of Northeastern Italy is well-situated to produce crisp, fruit-flavored Pinot Grigio.

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nettles, citrus and minerals. The palate is fresh and acidic, while the flavors of green apple, scallion, pineapple, lemon and grapefruit come together well. Clean and not overly acidic on the finish. Varietally speaking, this is on the money. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

86 Cuatro Rayas 2009 Verdejo (Rueda); \$14. Aromas of cactus pad, green apple and jalapeño are true Verdejo, while the palate brings citrusy, melony fruit as well as chalky, minerally dryness. Tastes a bit like white grape skins, with tangerine and lemon on the finish. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

RIBEIRO

90 Viña Costeira 2008 Ribeiro; \$15. A treasure at this price. The nose is impeccably clean, with tropical fruit and honeyed melon aromas. Elegant in the mouth yet there's also just the right acidic pop to liven up the melon, kiwi and apple flavors. A pure, fruity ride. Treixadura, Torrontés, Loureira and Albariño comprise the blend. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

90 Viña Mein 2008 Fermentado en Barrica (Ribeiro); \$20. The label says it: fermented in barrel. And one sniff delivers the buttery, toasted character of a Burgundy or California Chardonnay. Underneath the oak, there's fine acidity and blazing apple fruit, and once it finishes you get a finely baked aftertaste. An interesting, elevated mix of Treixadura, Godello, Loureira and Albariño. —M.S.

88 Bodegas Docampo 2008 Vendimia Oro (Ribeiro); \$36. Minerality is a major player in this peachy white blend that throws off some salinity and pool water on the nose. The palate has a round balance to it, while the flavors of lemon-lime, pineapple and mango get it done. Fresh and melony on the finish. —M.S.

88 Viña Mein 2008 Ribeiro; \$18. Flowery and fresh, with a bit of talc and creaminess to the bouquet. A little soft in the mouth, but still wet and likable. Flavors of lemon-lime and celery are solid, while the finish is dry and peachy. Treixadura, Godello, Loureira and Albariño comprise the grape blend. —M.S.

87 Pazo Ribeiro 2008 Ribeiro; \$10. Chiseled aromas of lemon-lime and

spring flowers are lean but clean, and that pretty much describes this blend of Treixadura, Torrontés and Palomino. Lime and green banana are the key flavors, and the finish brings back lemon-lime and minerality. More basic than flashy, but nice in a neutral way. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Bodegas Docampo 2008 Viña do Campo (Ribeiro); \$18. Tight and largely neutral white fruit aromas show a little apple but little more. The palate is friendly and easy, with melon as the lead flavor. Turns more citrusy and weighty on the finish, which fades fast. —M.S.

SPAIN RED WINES

RIBERA DEL DUERO

94 Emilio Moro 2007 Malleolus de Sanchomartin Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$205. Another winner from Emilio Moro. The nose is a touch minty and very spicy, but the black fruit element is there and overall the bouquet sings of integration. Pure, enthralling and big, with monster black fruit flavors, complexity, rich oak and a long, smooth finish. Stylish yet powerful; drink from 2013 through 2020. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

93 Emilio Moro 2007 Malleolus de Valderramiro Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$176. Big and sultry as always, with bacon, smoke, black fruit and a full rack of spices making for a wonderful bouquet. Concentrated and ripped for a 2007, with blackberry, clove, pepper, cinnamon and vanilla flavors. And then comes tobacco and more spice on the finish, which is grabby but understandable because it's so young. Best from 2012 through 2019. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

92 Alidis 2005 Expression Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$59. Really nice and lush, with an aromatic mix of tobacco, baked fruit, mocha, vanilla, shoe polish, earth and more. It displays a ripe, friendly feel and yummy flavors of mocha, chocolate and savory, subtle berry fruits. Layered on the finish, with lasting notes of fig, mocha and blackberry.

Drink now through 2012. Imported by Hidalgo Imports, LLC. —M.S.

91 Bodegas y Viñedos Tábula 2005 Damana Crianza (Ribera del Duero); \$21. A rewarding wine that isn't overly pricey or difficult to enjoy. Dark, lightly baked aromas hint at raisin and marshmallow, while the palate has a deep texture and vital acidity. Savory, tea-infused flavors bring pulse and kick, and as a whole it delivers a true reflection of what Ribera del Duero should be. Imported by Premium Blend, Inc. —M.S.

91 Comenge 2005 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$30. Impressive for the way it blends modern richness with authentic aromas and flavors. The nose offers prune, leather, blackberry and fine dried cheese, while the palate is savory and smooth, with chocolaty, round berry fruit flavors and then additional chocolate and toast on the finish. Lively and dense, but not heavy. Drink now through 2013. Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners. —M.S.

91 Emilio Moro 2007 Malleolus Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$71. Earth, rubber, spice, oak and bold berry aromas give this a classic Ribera nose, while the palate is pure and sensual, with shining raspberry, strawberry and plum flavors. Control and poise are on display, and the finish is clean, dry, warm and satisfying. Will be better in two or three years; best from 2012 through 2018. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. **Cellar Selection.** —M.S.

90 Felix Callejo 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$30. Full and dark, with aromas of bacon, crusty minerality, black fruits and spice. Balanced yet bullish, with integrated tannins and toasty, coffee-infused flavors that go straight to black. Long and showing additional coffee on the finish. Drinkable now. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

90 O. Fournier 2005 AlfaSpiga Tinto del Pais (Ribera del Duero); \$47. Very dark and oaky, with lemon, bacon, charcoal and high-toned black fruit aromas. The palate is rich and warm, almost heavy, with intense blackberry, chocolate and figgy flavors. Shows very nice texture and size but also tips toward molten ripeness and heavy sweetness. Drink soon. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

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89 Bodegas y Viñedos Tábula 2004 Tábula (Ribera del Duero); \$29.

Baked, roasted and earthy, with a deep palate of plum, berry and spice aromas. We wouldn't label this a complex or complicated wine; what you smell and taste initially is more or less what you get. Spicy and chocolaty on the finish, and satisfying. Imported by Premium Blend, Inc. —M.S.

89 Matarromera 2007 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$29.

Rooty smelling, with cola, sarsaparilla, spiced meats and leafy berry aromas. The palate is plump and soft but healthy, with round, sweet berry fruit flavors and ample spice. A generous wine that's hefty, broad and ready to drink. Impressive given that its run is 45,000 cases. Imported by Vinos Libres. —M.S.

89 O. Fournier 2005 Tinto del Pais (Ribera del Duero); \$77.

An immense, heavily concentrated and sweet wine with aromas of bacon, wood smoke, citrus peel and jammy berry. The palate is rich and unctuous, so much so that it might qualify as syrupy in some circles. The flavors run toward roasted berries, fig paste and chocolate, and all totaled it's bold but a little overripe. Drink now. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

89 Resalte 2005 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$32.

Nice on the bouquet, with aromas of licorice, tobacco, earth, mineral and solid berry fruit. The palate is a blend of power and smooth tannins, and the flavors of black fruit tilt toward fleshy, with buttery oak as an accent. A little flat on the finish, with herbal notes, toast and fig spread. Ready to drink. Imported by F.B. McDonald Imports. —M.S.

89 Vizcarra 2007 JC Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$24.

Initiates with savory, mildly soupy aromas on top of berry fruit. The palate is plump, ripe and balanced, with mocha, coffee and dark, meaty berry flavors. Toasty, dry and very solid on the finish, and convincingly rich as a whole. Imported by Ole Imports. —M.S.

88 Arrocal 2007 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$19.

Smoky and dry, with aromas of tire rubber and mildly herbal, leafy red fruits. The palate has a dry, rugged, scratchy feel while the flavors veer toward baked raspberry, earth notes and coffee. Finishes nicely, with berry

fruit at first and then herbal, oaky afternotes. Imported by Grapes of Spain. —M.S.

88 Cepa 21 2007 C21 Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$25.

Floral and lighter bodied, with attractive red fruit aromas and a modicum of exotic spice. The palate is tight, pure and a little sharp and pointed, while the flavors are of flashy, zesty raspberry. A juicy wine that treads lightly rather than with a hammer. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

88 Emilio Moro 2007 Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$25.

Opens with black fruit aromas, dry oak and spice. The palate shows an oaky creaminess, sticky tannins and solid berry fruit flavors that are matched and maybe even trumped by buttery oak. A little dry and drawing on the finish, but still a very nice RDD. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

88 Felix Callejo 2006 Viña Pilar Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$22.

A nicely made and easy to like kind of young Ribera red with clean, bold blackberry aromas and flavors that fit the wine's big, tannic structure. Composed on the back palate and beefy on the finish. Perfect for grilled meats. Drink now through 2012. Imported by The Artisan Collection. —M.S.

88 O. Fournier 2007 Spiga Tinto del Pais (Ribera del Duero); \$31.

Dark in color and hefty for an '07, with vanilla, balsam wood and berry aromas. The feel and body here are appropriate, while the flavors of black cherry and plum are snappy, direct, pure and clean. Bold, lively and nice, but nothing too complicated or powerful. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

88 Pago de Carraovejas 2006 Crianza (Ribera del Duero); \$57.

Big, bawdy, hard and concentrated, with black fruit and floral aromas. The palate is grabby and fully tannic, while the flavors run toward blackberry, coffee and vanilla. Rich and espresso-like on the finish, with no shortage of oak and richness. Very big at 15% alcohol. Imported by Kysela Père et Fils. —M.S.

88 Paramo de Corcos 2007 Abuela Cleofé (Ribera del Duero); \$50.

Dark and very toasty, with espresso, bacon and

roasted black fruit aromas. Tight and drying in the mouth, with biting tannins, a lot of oak and finally mildly herbal flavors of blackberry and burnt toast. Hard and dark, but big and boisterous, with a blatant barrel influence. Imported by Classic Wines, Inc. —M.S.

88 Prado Rey 2005 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$25.

A black wine with aromas of graphite, molten earth and black fruit. The palate is a pounder with strong tannins and blazing acidity, and that creates a mouthfeel with grating intensity and roasted black fruit flavors. Lively late, with herbal notes and a lasting tannic bite. At over 15% alcohol, there's a lot of fire and toughness, so hold for a few more years and hopefully the tannins will soften. Imported by Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. *Cellar Selection.* —M.S.

88 Resalte 2004 Reserva Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$70.

Leather, tobacco, citrus peel and herbs make for a controlled bouquet that doesn't smack you in the face. The body, however, is tannic and grabby, while the flavors of sweet berry carry a roasted angle and a dash of spice. Chocolaty and spicy on the finish, but again it goes down hard and tannic, which is a drawback. Imported by F.B. McDonald Imports. —M.S.

87 Alonso del Yerro 2007 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$28.

A bit rubbery and earthy, with compost, smoky bacon and black fruit aromas. Nicely balanced with a good mouthfeel, and showing solid berry and plum flavors. Peppery on the finish, with some roasted overtones. Perfectly good for a tough vintage. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

87 Emilio Moro 2008 Finca Resalso Tinto Fino (Ribera del Duero); \$15.

A recommended entry-level Ribera, with aromas of violets, minerals and oak. The palate has a standard, competent feel and balance along with flavors of gangly berry fruit and black cherry. Mocha and vanilla help sweeten and soften up the finish, but overall it's a regular, fresh type of wine. Imported by Fine Estates From Spain. —M.S.

87 Recorba 2006 Crianza Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$18.

A chunky, thick, earthy type of wine with syrupy, sweet berry flavors and a friendly palate that's tannic but not too much so. Caramel and carob mix with coffee and cola on the finish, and overall it is good

RDD if you don't mind full extraction and syrupy richness. Imported by Testa Wines Of The World. —M.S.

87 Vivir, Vivir 2008 Tempranillo (Ribera del Duero); \$12. The packaging and name are a little contrived, but what's in the bottle stands up to scrutiny. The aromas are warm and plummy, with a hint of toast and cream. The palate is clean and juicy, with snappy black raspberry fruit and a fruity carry-over onto the finish. Spunky, fresh and pleasant. Imported by Grapes of Spain. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

PORTUGAL WHITE WINES

VINHO VERDE

91 Provam 2009 Portal do Fidalgo Alvarinho (Vinho Verde); \$NA. Rich and soft, classic creamed apple Alvarinho, with a great bite of apple skin acidity. The wine has a caramel edge, giving just an extra complexity and weight. A delicious, juicy, ripe and crisp aftertaste. Imported by Admiral Imports. —R.V.

90 Adega Cooperativa Ponte de Lima 2009 Colheita Selecionada Loureiro (Vinho Verde); \$NA. Loureiro has made the region of Ponte de Lima its home, and this full and rich wine brings together the crispness with a more serious perfumed character. It is a wine that could age for a year, although its extreme vibrant fruit is already in great form. Imported by HGC Imports. —R.V.

90 Aveleda 2009 Quinta da Aveleda (Vinho Verde); \$9. Now in a smart clear blue bottle, this is Aveleda's estate wine. It is always a classic, with just some extra weight to give it distinction. The flavors are apple, brightened with lime, finishing with vibrant acidity. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

90 Casa do Valle 2009 Grande Escolha (Vinho Verde); \$NA. Great ripe fruit, with flavors of apricots and touches of toast and caramel to go with the purest lemon juice fruit flavors. It has more weight than an average Vinho Verde, a concentrated wine, bursting with fruit. Imported by Triage Wines. —R.V.

90 Provam 2009 Varanda do Conde (Vinho Verde); \$NA. A blend of Alvarinho and Trajadura, this combines a creamy texture with bright green fruit acidity. There is weight as well as freshness, the aftertaste rich while also crisp. Imported by Admiral Imports. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

88 Adega Cooperativa Ponte de Lima 2009 Loureiro (Vinho Verde); \$NA. A Vinho Verde with some weight from the ripe pear and grapefruit-flavored fruit. It is bone dry, very fresh, the intensity of flavors turning this into a fine food wine. Imported by HGC Imports. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

MINHO

92 Aveleda 2009 Alvarinho (Minho); \$13. Alvarinho is the grape of northern Vinho Verde, giving a style that is rich and complex. The fruit here fits that character, packed with pear, apple and citrus flavors and a light texture of lime zest. Note: this wine is commercialized as Follies Alvarinho outside the U.S. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

91 Aveleda 2009 Follies (Minho); \$13. A broad style of wine, bringing in the richness of Alvarinho and the more crisp character of Loureiro. It is very much in Vinho Verde style, just with extra power to give a final creamy character. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. **Best Buy.** —R.V.

DOURO

90 Wine & Soul 2008 Guru (Douro); \$NA. A fresh, cream and baked apple wine, with some good citrus zest, acidity and a taut texture. It has a pure, crisp character which then moves into a firm, pear juice flavor. Another year would soften and release the spicy wood. Imported by Michael Skurnik Wines. —R.V.

88 Quinta de Ventozelo 2009 Ventozelo QV (Douro); \$13. Moscatel dominates the blend of this wine and gives a perfumed character. It has some good weight and freshness, a bright green plum and pear flavor. The acidity and ripe fruit are well in balance. Imported by Signature Imports. **Best Buy.** —R.V.




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86 Quinta do Passadouro 2008 Passadouro Branco (Douro); \$NA. A warm wine, open, broad and soft with just some mineral texture. Flavors are of quince, sweet white plums, with some final green, herbal character. Imported by Martine's Wines. —R.V.

OTHER WHITE WINES

93 Aveleda 2007 Grande Folhies Quinta da Agueira (Bairrada); \$40. A blend of Chardonnay and Maria Gomes, here is a ripe wood- and apricot-flavored wine. It is full, spicy, livened by crispness from a red apple skin texture. The vanilla from the wood adds a delicious richness to this impressive wine. Imported by FJN Fine Wines LLC. —R.V.

87 Companhia das Quintas 2009 Quinta do Cardo (Beira Interior); \$14. A delicious citric-dominated wine, very fresh, with a great apple skin texture, bright acidity and crisp white fruits. It dances easily, lightly, ready to drink now. Imported by Well-Oiled Wine Company. —R.V.

87 Cortes de Cima 2009 Chaminé Branco (Alentejano); \$12. Crisp acidity and an attractive line in vivid citrus give a fresh, ready-to-drink wine. It has a bright pear juice final flavor. Imported by Tri-Vin Imports. —R.V.

SOUTH AFRICA RED WINES

CABERNETS & BLENDS

91 Kanonkop 2004 Estate wine Cabernet Sauvignon (Stellenbosch); \$35. Luscious aromas of black cherry, raspberry and coffee are followed by a balanced wave of mocha, plums, vanilla and tobacco on the palate. Spicy with ageable tannins, the wine would go well with roasted meat, beef or stews. Imported by Cape Classics. *Cellar Selection.* —S.K.

91 Raka 2005 Quinary (Western Cape); \$20. This evolving Bordeaux blend offers beautiful aromas of blackberry, anise and spice, followed by a full, complex mouth of tobacco, cedar, black fruit and spice. Lingering

finish. Pair with grilled lamb, or a beef filet. Imported by Cape Ardor LLC. —S.K.

90 Vilafonté 2006 Series M (Paarl); \$35. The regal Series M blend starts with aromas of dark juicy plum and black currant, coffee and chocolate, rolling into an array of bright, spicy black fruit, tobacco and cedar. Rich and savory on the palate but enlivened by good minerality, it's a classic South African red with world-class balance. Imported by Broadbent Selections, Inc. —S.K.

87 Camberley 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (Stellenbosch); \$39. This red starts with a gorgeous nose of anise, mint, spicebox and pepper, followed by more delicate, food-friendly black fruit and spice. Approachable and easydrinking, the wine has a softer touch that allows it to be paired with everything from beef stew to lighter fare. Imported by Terry Seitz. —S.K.

87 Dornier 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (Stellenbosch); \$24. Earthy spice and smoked meat on the nose are followed by flavors of red currants, pepper and spice on the palate. A spin of cedar and oak give the wine added muscle. An assertive everyday red for hearty dishes. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —S.K.

87 Morgenhof 2004 Fantail Cabernet Sauvignon (Stellenbosch); \$22. An alluring nose of black cherry, cedar, cinnamon and anise leads this friendly, ageable Cabernet. Cedar, spice and tobacco unfurl on the tongue, offering a classic style red with food-friendly restraint. An elegant sip suitable for lamb, beef or aged cheeses. Imported by Terry Seitz. —S.K.

PINOT NOIR

90 Hamilton Russell 2007 Pinot Noir (Hemel en Aarde); \$44. One of South Africa's premier Pinot Noir producers, Hamilton Russell offers a 2007 Pinot that marries earthy and primal with poised and balanced. The nose exhibits black cherry, clove and anise, and on the palate, savory, rich fruit is balanced by a racy backbone and plucky spices. Elegant and intriguing. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —S.K.

90 Paul Cluver 2006 Seven Flags Pinot Noir (Elgin); \$65. From the cool-climate region of Elgon, the Cluver Pinot

offers sweet berries and violet on the nose and an unfolding palate of red berry, coffee and chocolate. Restrained and ageable, the wine's acidity gives it food-oriented character; pair with game or wild fish. Imported by Vinnovative Imports. —S.K.

89 Muratie 2008 Pinot Noir (Simonsberg-Stellenbosch); \$40. This Pinot starts with a nose of bright cherry, spice and strawberry, followed by integrated cherry, clove, pepper and spice flavors. Balanced and delicate, the wine regardless has a masculine edge. Imported by Worthwhile Wine Company. —S.K.

88 Meerlust 2007 Pinot Noir (Stellenbosch); \$25. A nose wafting violet, clove and pepper is followed by an elegant, flirty array of black cherry, violet and spice on the palate. Delicate, floral, food friendly and feminine, it's an alluring sip that will pair well with duck, fish. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. —S.K.

87 Paul Cluver 2008 Pinot Noir (Elgin); \$20. Black cherry, cinnamon and cloves on the nose are followed by a fine balance of vanilla, smoke and cherry on the palate. Easygoing but complex, the wine has a poise for which Cluver is known and will pair well with everything from salad to duck. Imported by Vinnovative Imports. —S.K.

ARGENTINA RED WINES

BLENDED RED WINES

93 Monteviejo 2006 Red Wine (Uco Valley); \$45. A wonderful wine from the Uco Valley of Mendoza that opens with fine fruit, richness and molten earth. The palate is big as they come but not hard and out of whack, and the flavors are an amalgam of rich black plum, berry fruit, fig paste and chocolate. Smoky and sultry on the back end, with mocha and coffee for finishing notes. Drink now through 2014. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections. *Editors' Choice.* —M.S.

90 Andeluna 2006 Celebración Reserve (Mendoza); \$20. A power-packed blend of 60% Cabernet and 40% Malbec that offers mossy aromas, earth and lush black

fruit scents. The palate is lively yet balanced, with saturated wild berry, toast, anise and pepper flavors. Dark, toasted and showing licorice on the finish. A little hot and aggressive, so drink in late 2010 through 2012. Imported by San Francisco Wine Exchange. —M.S.

90 Doña Paula 2006 Salix Vineyard Tannat-Malbec (Mendoza); \$NA.

Quite intense, with blasting aromas of blackberry, coconut, cocoa and even leather and horse hide. It's 65% Tannat and 35% Malbec, and as a whole it's big, grabby, tight and full of blackberry and raspberry flavors that bring an herbal twist. Smoky and herbal on the finish. Imported by Vineyard Brands. —M.S.

89 Bodega Renacer 2007 Enamore (Mendoza); \$25.

A joint venture between the Renacer winery of Argentina and Chile and Allegrini from the Veneto in Italy. Thus it makes sense that this five-grape blend is done in the Amarone style, with concentrated, dried grapes. Aromas are generous, minty and floral, and the palate is jammy and concentrated. Rich and a little raisiny, just like Amarone. Drink now. Imported by Winebow. —M.S.

88 Bodega Norton 2007 Privada (Mendoza); \$25.

Good but a step down from recent vintages. Big and brawny on the nose, with oak-based aromas of shoe polish, chocolate mint chips and mocha. The thick palate is deep, raisiny and chunky, with roasted black fruit flavors touched up by chocolate. Very good and likable, but not as thorough and alluring as it has been. 40% Malbec with 30% each Cabernet and Merlot. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

88 Callia 2006 Grand Callia (San Juan); \$43.

Until now all we've tried are Callia's basic \$9 varietals. So this is a big step up in intention, price and power. The bouquet is compact and sweet, with coconut, juniper and foresty aromas. Fresh and slightly grating on the palate, with spunky raspberry and cocoa. Turns more raw and rough as it expands, but overall we like this blend of Shiraz, Tannat, Malbec and Merlot. Imported by Palm Bay International. —M.S.

87 Camino del Inca 2007 Quipu Blend (Cafayate); \$65.

Like many Cafayate reds of stature, this opens with funky murkiness, leather, animal notes and baked characteristics.

The blend is 70% Tannat with Malbec and Syrah, and overall it's full-bodied, snappy in the mouth, and good in terms of offering integrated plum, raspberry and spice flavors. Shows a lot of heat and burn on the finish, however. A wine with individuality. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Epic Wines. —M.S.

87 Cruz Alta 2006 Chairman's Blend (Mendoza); \$17.

A bit grapey and jammy on the nose, with a slight hint of bramble and stem. It's solid in the mouth, with kick and sweet berry fruit flavors. On the finish it falls off some, leaving a mildly candied aftertaste. Not perfect but overall it's a well-made blend of 85% Malbec with Cab and Syrah filling things out. Imported by Clock Tower Imports. —M.S.

86 Monteviejo 2007 Petite Fleur (Mendoza); \$30.

Borderline heavy, with stewy black fruit aromas that turn savory then murky and gaseous. The palate has clacky acidity and flavors of sweet, roasted berry fruits. Lasting on the finish, with citric acidity that seems as though it was forced onto the wine. 50% Malbec with 30% Cabernet and 10% each Syrah and Merlot. Imported by Bob Bofman Selections. —M.S.

MALBEC

90 Flechas de los Andes 2008 Gran Malbec (Mendoza); \$24.

Deep as a country well, with lush black plum and blackberry aromas as well as lead pencil and balsam wood. The palate is solid but not overly tough or complex, and the flavors of cassis, berry and black cherry are more than satisfying. A pure, textbook modern red wine; drinkable now and over the next couple of years. Imported by Monsieur Tonton Selection Ltd. —M.S.

90 Trapiche 2007 Viña Adolfo Ahumada Single Vineyard Villa Bastías Malbec (Mendoza); \$50.

With floral aromas, toasty oak notes and solid berry fruit, this bottling is the best among Trapiche's 2007 single-vineyard Malbecs. The palate features smoky berry fruit but also high acidity and some scour. Fortunately it's also layered and structured. Will do best with meats and fatty foods. Drink now through 2015. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.



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89 Colomé 2008 Estate Malbec (Calchaquí Valley); \$25. A typically huge Colomé wine with initial damp, murky, funky aromas that give way to earth, roasted fruit and compost. Fortunately it's fresher in the mouth, and the wine definitely improves with airing. Still, the palate is big and oily, with roasted berry, herb and wild, exotic flavors. A unique style of Malbec from old Calchaquí vines. Imported by Hess Collection. —M.S.

89 Trapiche 2007 Viña Fausto Orellana de Escobar Single Vineyard Malbec (La Consulta); \$50. Potent smelling, with black pepper, lots of oak and true berry fruit aromas. The palate is a bit pointed and high in acidity, while the flavors of raspberry, currants and red plum are solid. Finishes a little jagged and acidic, but at worst that staunch acidity will keep it alive for years to come. Hold until at least 2011. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

88 Familia Schroeder 2008 Saurus Barrel Fermented Malbec (Argentina); \$25. Dark, piercing, crusty black fruit aromas suggest burnt toast and lemon, and although there's a lemony bite to the palate, once it airs out chunky black fruit flavors take over. Not a thriller but it's pure and clean. Textbook mid-to-upper-level Malbec with some flair. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

88 Michel Torino 2008 Don David Reserve Malbec (Cafayate); \$16. Starts with rubbery, intense aromas, but with breathing it settles on earthy berry fruit and oak-driven coffee. The mouthfeel is good and shows nice lemony acids, while the flavors vascillate between tangy/floral and herbal blackberry. Sweet, concentrated and rich on the finish, with a lasting wave of mocha. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

88 Valentin Bianchi 2009 Sensual Malbec (Mendoza); \$10. A little sweet and candied on the nose but there are also floral aromas that are alluring. The palate is plump but offers good balance and structure, while the flavors run toward beefy dark berry fruit, spice and chocolate. Long, deep and roasted on the finish. Quite good for ten bucks. Imported by Quintessential Wines. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

88 Zonda 2009 Malbec (Mendoza); \$15. A nice wine with aromas of lead

pencil, violets, black fruit and a sprinkling of lemon zest. The palate has body and a chunky outlook, while the flavors of berry fruits, spice and something slightly exotic work. A solid, approachable wine that should bring a smile to the face of any Malbec lover. Imported by Ecosur Group, LLC. —M.S.

87 Areo 2008 Malbec Malbec (Neuquén); \$16. Concentrated, with plenty of aromatic richness and dark fruit aromas of blackberry and cassis. The palate features proper extraction and weight, with forceful, powered-up flavors of wild berry and toast. Solid on the finish, with good ending weight and legs. Imported by Simone International. —M.S.

87 Benegas 2008 Libertad Vineyards Malbec (Mendoza); \$25. There's a mix of good and questionable here. The nose starts out gaseous and stinky, as if it's begging for air. Give it time and it settles on exotic, warm blueberry and floral aromas. The palate is downright syrupy and thick, with licorice, bitter chocolate and sweet berry flavors. Rich as they come but also soft and on the brink of overripe. Not a wine for the cellar. Imported by Vias Imports. —M.S.

87 Bodega Renacer 2009 Punto Final Malbec (Perdriel); \$12. Basic but full and ripe, with black cherry and cassis aromas. The palate has some snap and clack to it, but flavors of raspberry are softened and enriched by vanilla and creamy accents. Shows more on the nose than in the mouth, but overall it is a nice wine. Imported by Winebow. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

86 Trapiche 2007 Viña Domingo F. Sarmiento Single Vineyard Malbec (La Consulta); \$50. Aromas of mocha, rubber, smoky leather and berry fruit indicate good things to come, but in the mouth this wine fails to deliver equal to its price and the previous successes of Trapiche's single-vineyard Malbec project. Scouring acidity is the main culprit; the wine seems clipped, tartaric and angular, thus it's all superficial and not deep or rich enough to rate better. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

86 Trapiche 2008 Broquel Malbec (Mendoza); \$17. This vintage of Broquel reflects the cool, challenged characteristics of the '08 vintage. It has snap and berry aromas and flavors along with obvious oak, char and

mocha. The palate is more driving and linear than previous years, with juicy, snappy cherry and wood at the base. Finishes with coffee, toast and controlled bitterness. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

SYRAH

91 Pascual Toso 2007 Barrancas Vineyards Alta Reserve Syrah (Mendoza); \$36. Extremely ripe and concentrated but arguably a bit too massive for its own good. That said, we love the wine's tobacco, cassis and inky qualities, but worry a little about the lemony oak character and overall potency. Deep as midnight in terms of flavors, with black fruits galore setting up a richly packed, ultraripe finish. New World to the max but very tasty and rich. Imported by T.G.I.C. Importers. —M.S.

90 Viña Alicia 2007 San Alberto Syrah (Luján de Cuyo); \$27. A touch leathery and cooked at first, but with time the bouquet deftly blends saucy, savory Syrah aromas with sun-baked black fruit notes. The palate is saturated and chunky, with aggressive sweet-and-savage flavors of grilled meats, spice and burnt brown sugar. Roasted, warm and mildly bitter on the finish. Drink now through 2012. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —M.S.

89 Michel Torino 2007 Don David Reserve Syrah (Cafayate); \$17. Tight, concentrated and deep, with rubbery aromas of black fruit and earth. The palate is rich and layered, with lemony oak setting up herbal, powerful berry fruit flavors that come with hints of tea and briar. Zesty as well as rich, and well balanced. Nicely done for Salta Syrah. Imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons, Ltd. —M.S.

88 Luigi Bosca 2007 Reserva Syrah (Maipú); \$21. Sweet and candied on the nose, almost like a jelly doughnut at first. But with airing it turns more savory, herbal and dry. Flavors of tomato, raspberry and herbs are robust and interesting, while the finish is less so as it flattens out and seems baked. Very good but needing a bit more spunk to rate higher. —M.S.

86 Trivento 2008 Reserve Syrah (Mendoza); \$11. Savory, baked cassis and blackberry aromas show form and solidity, while the palate is deep and a little soft, with lush, slightly roasted berry and black currant aromas.

Chocolaty on the finish yet not too heavy or forced. Not all that Syrah-like but it still smells and tastes good. Imported by Banfi Vintners. **Best Buy.** —M.S.

AUSTRALIA WHITE WINES

CHARDONNAY

87 Henry's Drive Vignerons 2009 Morse Code Chardonnay (Padthaway); \$9. This has all the touchstones of good Chardonnay: just enough body and richness, apple, pineapple and melon fruit flavors and a crisp, citrusy finish. Solid Chardonnay for under \$10. Imported by Quintessential Wines. **Best Buy.** —J.C.

86 Beelgara 2008 Estate Range Chardonnay (South Eastern Australia); \$9. This South Eastern Australia Chard packs quite a punch for the price. The nose is fresh but subtle, with hints of hand soap and cut apples. There's a luxurious quality to the palate that melds well with flavors of almond and pear and carries over to the silky, medium finish. Winds up on a note of tropical fruit. Drink now through 2011. Imported by The Yancey Marketing Group. **Best Buy.** —J.R.

86 Marquee 2008 Classic Chardonnay (Victoria); \$12. A solid value, the Marquee Victoria Chardonnay has an appealing restraint, hitting pretty high notes on the nose but turning serious and weighty in the mouth. The cream and papaya flavors reach a nice intensity before fading to a mouthwatering finish of guava and pine nuts. Drink now. Imported by Marquee Artisan Wines. —J.R.

85 Wakefield Estate 2008 Promised Land Unwooded Chardonnay (South Australia); \$13. Expressive, with exotic tones of guanabana and mango that give way to a buttery palate accented by fresh lemon. The finish isn't long but there's an interesting sweet note at the end, along with a final citrus twang. Drink now. Imported by Brown-Forman Corp. —J.R.

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

88 Tamar Ridge 2007 Kayena Vineyard Pinot Gris (Tasmania); \$22. An extra year has added some depth here. Lemon and apricot fruit are layered over almonds and macadamia on the nose while a hint of jasmine adds interest to the palate. The medium finish offers up an intriguing nuttiness. Best before 2012. Imported by Robert Whale Selections Inc. —J.R.

86 Pewsey Vale 2008 Individual Vineyard Selection Pinot Gris (Eden Valley); \$18. This Pinot Gris is marching to the beat of its own drum, with some funky aromas and toast notes along with lemon and pear fruit. It's a tad volatile in the mouth but has some nice depth of flavor and a lingering cashew finish. Likeable for its originality. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. —J.R.

86 Redbank 2008 The Long Paddock Pinot Grigio (Victoria); \$10. Here's an Italian-styled Pinot Grigio, with a gently nutty nose and earthy low notes. It's faintly oily in the mouth but finishes crisp and light, with a pretty lemon zest accent. Drink up. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. —J.R.

85 Hazyblur 2008 Pinot Gris (Kangaroo Island); \$19. Hazyblur has coaxed some expressive fruit out of the often recalcitrant Pinot Gris grape. There's lemon and pear here, set against a backdrop of almond and spice. Soft and light, this is one to serve poolside. Imported by Bluestone Wine Solutions. —J.R.

85 Innocent Bystander 2008 Pinot Gris (Yarra Valley); \$20. Clean and subtle with intriguing musk scents and a medium-weight palate with orange peel and lemon fruit. While the palate is a bit lazy, there's a hit of acidity on the finish to keep things fresh. Drink now. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.R.

RIESLING

88 Pewsey Vale 2009 Individual Vineyard Selection Dry Riesling (Eden Valley); \$16. A classic Eden Valley Riesling, the Pewsey Vale opens with multi-dimensional citrus character, followed by decadent tones of kiwi and guava. Crisp and long in the mouth, there's a real

sense of elegance here. A final note of lemon adds a refreshing element to the long finish. Drink now or hold a few years for more nuanced complexity. Imported by Negotiants USA, Inc. **Editors' Choice.** —J.R.

88 Reilly's 2009 Barking Mad Riesling (Clare Valley); \$13. A classic Clare Valley Riesling, with prominent lime zest and kiwi character upfront and an energetic, zesty mouth bursting with well-integrated acidity and green apple notes. Finishes on a tasty tone of lime cordial. Drink now or age a few years. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. **Best Buy.** —J.R.

86 Penfolds 2009 Bin 51 Riesling (Eden Valley); \$20. A bit disappointing this year, the Bin 51 shows good cream and lemon complexity on the nose but there's also an earthy undertone that distracts. Nonetheless, the concentration is evident and a pleasant pear note adds interest to the crisp finish. Drink now. Imported by Foster's Wine Estates Americas. —J.R.

85 Schild Estate 2009 Riesling (Barossa); \$18. Fresh gooseberry, lemon and apple skin dominate the nose here, carrying over to the medium-weight palate. Although the acid seems a bit apart from the rest of the wine, this Barossa Riesling is pleasantly crisp, with nice spice and candied apple notes. Drink now to 2012. Imported by The Australia-New Zealand Wine Connection. —J.R.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

92 Shaw and Smith 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide Hills); \$25. The best Sauvignon Blanc yet from Shaw & Smith, the 2009 boasts terrifically fragrant aromas of passion fruit and pink grapefruit. It's intense and long, easily the qualitative equal of its top Kiwi cousins and better than most. Drink now–2011. Imported by Vintus LLC. **Editors' Choice.** —J.C.

88 Nepenthe 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide); \$16. Initial scents of paint thinner blow off to reveal a tropical cornucopia of mango, pineapple and guava. Meanwhile, the lime-inflected palate is crisp, elegant and sophisticated and ends on a crisp chalk note. Try with fresh seafood. Imported by Click Wine Group. —J.R.

87 Groom 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Adelaide); \$18. On the subtle side for a Sauvignon Blanc, the Groom 2009 offers up exotic kiwi and guava scents before settling in to a more serious palate of lemon and pear. Its crisp and well-balanced, with a lovely final note of grapefruit peel. Drink now. Imported by Groom Wines. —J.R.

VERDELHO

87 Bleasdale 2009 Potts' Catch Verdelho (Langhorne Creek); \$14. There aren't many white wines coming out of Langhorne Creek, but this Verdelho is a good one, offering crisp, citrusy notes of pear and pineapple, medium body and a clean, refreshing finish. Drink now. Imported by Southern Starz, Inc. —J.C.

87 Zonte's Footstep 2009 Single-Site Verdelho (Langhorne Creek); \$15. This medium-bodied white features attractive scents of lime zest and pineapple. On the palate, the flavors veer toward apple and citrus, which fade rapidly on the finish. Drink now. Imported by Old Bridge Cellars. —J.C.

CALIFORNIA RED WINES

PINOT NOIR

95 Fort Ross 2007 Fort Ross Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$37. What a beautiful Pinot Noir for drinking now with lamb chops or maybe a rich, exotic Ahi tuna tartare. Brilliantly crisp in acidity, with a clean, bracing mouthfeel, it offers dazzlingly rich flavors of raspberries, cherries, orange zest, Dr. Pepper cola and Asian spices, with smoky oak adding elaborate tiers of vanilla char. For the price, it's a very great buy. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

94 Mercy 2008 Cedar Lane Vineyard Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco); \$35. An absolutely delicious Pinot Noir. Hard to exaggerate the drinkability factor. Supremely ripe cherry and raspberry fruit is highlighted by brilliantly crisp acidity to make it all bright and lively. Oak plays second fiddle, contributing rich, tasteful notes of smoke, vanilla and buttered cinnamon

toast. Just gorgeous for drinking now and for the next 5–6 years with your best fare. —S.H.

94 Robert Stemmler 2007 Ferguson Block Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$44. A powerful and dramatic Pinot Noir. The first thing you notice is the depth. The range of flavors goes on and on, ranging from cherries, oranges and cola through mocha to more classic notes of forest floor, mushrooms and peppery spices. Bone dry, with ultra-fine tannins, it's a gorgeous wine now, and should age gracefully for 6–8 years. —S.H.

93 Armanino Family Cellars 2008 The Whitewing Amber Ridge Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50. This beautiful Pinot Noir drinks well now because it's so fruity, delicately structured and crisp. Shows oak-inspired and refined raspberry, cherry, cola, pomegranate and cedar flavors that finish in a rich swirl of exotic spices. Has the inherent balance to develop through at least 2014. —S.H.

93 Crossbarn by Paul Hobbs 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$35. A beautiful Pinot Noir. Plays in the major leagues, with its refined texture and complex flavors of cherries, raspberries, licorice and sandalwood, with a long, spicy finish. The most notable feature is the structure. Feels so lush and fine, so delectable, so dramatic. This is one of the best Pinots available for drinking now. —S.H.

93 Robert Stemmler 2007 Nugent Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$40. Very fine and complex. This deeply flavored Pinot Noir is powerful, but it's also elegantly silky, which is the magic combination. Shows perfectly ripe cherry and raspberry fruit, with gorgeous overtones of oak and spices. Beautiful now, and will age well through 2014 or so. —S.H.

93 Small Vines 2008 MK Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$65. Nothing small about this Pinot Noir. It's almost as good as the 2007, which was terrific. Dry and elegant, it shows massively concentrated cherry, raspberry and cola flavors, with a rich coating of smoky sandalwood. Wonderful now, but the youthful power suggests time in the cellar through 2015 or so. —S.H.

92 Armanino Family Cellars 2008 The Ringneck La Encantada Pinot Noir

(Sta. Rita Hills); \$50. You should give this some time in the cellar, because right now, it's all about juicy primary raspberry and cherry fruit and sweet, smoky oak. Nothing's come together. We know that Pinot Noirs from these southerly, north-facing slopes of the valley yield wines of longevity, and this well-made, tart one, from such a well-regarded vineyard, should reward after 4–6 years. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$34. Although this is the least costly of the winery's Pinots, it's a lovely wine. Blending from a vast source of vineyards has given winemaker Cabral the ability to fill in divots of every kind. Gentle and dry, this rich, complex Pinot Noir has the elegance and style you expect from Williams Selyem. —S.H.

92 Windy Oaks 2007 Limited Release Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$55. A lovely Pinot Noir, made in a drier style that preserves elegance while maintaining a powerful varietal character. Feels pure and refined in the mouth, with deep, rich flavors of cherries and pomegranates and earthier notes of mushrooms, soy sauce, cola and licorice. Elegant and crisp, and an ager. Best now–2015. —S.H.

91 Merryvale 2008 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$35. This is a very rich, fruity Pinot Noir, so if you like ripeness, you'll love it. Floods the mouth with cherries, raspberries and strawberries, while 50% new French oak adds even richer notes of vanilla and buttered toast. It's flamboyant now, and should be opened in the next 3–4 years. —S.H.

91 Sequana 2008 Sarmento Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$32. Winemaker James MacPhail brings his touch to this ripe, delicious Pinot Noir. It explodes in raspberries and cherries, but it's no more fruit bomb. Shows fine acidity and even a dusting of tannins that provide structural integrity. Really nice now, and should develop over the next 4–6 years. —S.H.

91 Sequana 2008 Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir (Green Valley); \$40. Ultrarich and forward in fruit, and what's wrong with that? Floods the palate with pie filling flavors of cherries and raspberries, with a rich coating of oak that adds vanilla, buttered toast and caramel. The richness is balanced with crisp acidity. —S.H.

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91 Testarossa 2008 Garys' Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$54. Big, powerful and ripe, in the manner of Santa Lucia Highlands, this Pinot Noir has very dense, tannic flavors of cherries, black raspberries and cola, accented with spicy oak. It's extraordinarily rich, if a little too full-bodied. Too heavy now. Give it 4–5 years in the cellar. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Townley 2007 La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$48. A bit too tannic and tough right now, although the cherry, raspberry, orange, cola and sandalwood flavors are very rich and attractive. The finish is where things really get interesting, offering spicy length and complexity. Needs time in the cellar. Give it a good sleep until after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

91 Wild Horse 2007 Unbridled Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$36. Here's a beautifully lush, rich Pinot Noir. Made in a silky, drink-me-now style, it has flashy flavors of raspberries, cherries, cola and sandalwood. A very nice, upscale wine for pairing with steak, grilled salmon or rosemary-seasoned chicken. —S.H.

91 Williams Selyem 2008 Westside Road Neighbors Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$67. You don't want to drink this wine now. It's way too tannic, which also accentuates the acidity. It all makes for a tough palate experience, despite rich raspberry, cherry, cola and cedar flavors. So stash this vastly interesting Pinot Noir in your cellar for 3–5 years. But if you can't, decant. Even overnight. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Adrian Fog 2007 Oppenlander Vineyard Pinot Noir (Mendocino County); \$75. This big, powerful Pinot Noir needs some time to resolve its contradictions. It's totally dry, with silky tannins and fine coastal acidity, but there's a heavy density to the cherry, orange zest, spice and sandalwood flavors. A classic example of an ageworthy Pinot Noir, it should come into its own by 2013. —S.H.

90 Armanino Family Cellars 2008 The Pintail Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$50. A big wine, full-bodied and ripe, flooding the mouth with jammy raspberries, cherries, vanilla and sweet oak and a combination of all elements that's

as rich as white chocolate. But it's entirely dry, with fine acidity. Defines the ripe, muscular style of Santa Lucia Highlands. —S.H.

90 Pacific Coast 2007 Babcock Vineyards Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$62. This is a big, extracted, dense wine whose muscularity makes it a bit too oversized now. It's all primary cherries and raspberries, sweet red currants and sandalwood, and also is quite acidic and tannic. Feels clumsy and jagged, but that's a function of extreme youth. Cellar for 5–6 years, and it should be fine. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Robert Stemmler 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$36. A very nice Pinot that shows the classic elegance associated with this producer. It's one to drink now. Dry and silky, it offers rich, complex flavors of cherries, cola, spices and sandalwood. Feels really classy all the way through. —S.H.

90 Sonoma Coast Vineyards 2007 Freestone Hills Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$40. This is a hugely flavored, extracted Pinot Noir, distinctly Californian in its ripeness and size. It's massive in cherries and raspberries, with hints of cocoa, anise, Indian spices and black pepper. With 60% new French oak, it's also pretty toasty. A bit ungainly now, but should gain in the cellar. Better after 2013. **Cellar Selection.** —S.H.

90 Talbott 2008 Cuvee Sarah Case Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$75. Strong in fruit and acidity, this Pinot Noir swamps the palate with gigantic flavors of raspberries and cherries that taste like they were baked into a pie. That includes the pie crust, with it's spicy, vanilla smokiness. It's all a bit in your face, but it's flashy. —S.H.

90 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$46. Shows tart cranberry crispness in addition to richer cherry and raspberry fruit, but it's a fairly aloof wine now, with competing parts. Even though this isn't a single-vineyard Pinot, it needs time in the cellar, to let everything mellow. Give it 4–5 years. —S.H.

89 Small Vines 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$50. A touch of barnyard funk gives this Pinot an old-fashioned Burgundian touch. But the fruit is all California,

suggesting ripe cherries and raspberries, coated with plenty of sweet, smoky oak. A very nice, high-class Pinot Noir for drinking now and through 2013. —S.H.

88 Bouchaine 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$30. A nice Pinot from a producer with a long track record in Carneros. Dry and silky, it has flavors of cherries, raspberries, Dr. Pepper cola and spices, with smoky-sweet oak in the background. Could have a touch more complexity, but it's a solid wine for drinking now. —S.H.

88 Guarachi Family 2008 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$50. A bit sharp and rough at the moment, with a sandpapery, peppery scour. The flavors are of cherry pie filling and smoky cedar. Yet there's plenty of balance, and the ruggedly strong tannins suggest some cellaring. Give it a few years to mellow and knit together. —S.H.

88 Magness 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$20. Made in a lighter, earthier style, but still showing plenty of class. It's dry and silky, with sour cherry candy and spice flavors. Good value for a Pinot of this elegance. —S.H.

87 Albeno Munari 2007 Pinot Noir (Calaveras County); \$22. Good for this winery for having the guts to make and sell a Pinot Noir from Calaveras County. And it's pretty good. Dry and silky, it shows oak-influenced flavors of cherries and raspberries, with a kiss of oak. Feels properly elegant in the mouth. —S.H.

87 Bink 2007 Weir Vineyard Pinot Noir (Yorkville Highlands); \$40. Very forward in raspberry and cherry fruit, with a rich coating of sweet vanilla and toasty oak, this Pinot's problem is its structure. It's too soft and melted. But it sure is tasty. —S.H.

87 Gloria Ferrer 2005 Gravel Knob Vineyard Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$32. Released at the unusually old age of nearly five years, this Pinot Noir is quite acidic. That gives a tart bite to the cherry, cola and oak flavors. It's a bit angular and awkward, but is otherwise silky and dry. Could surprise with another 4–5 years in the bottle. —S.H.

87 La Fenêtre 2008 À Côté Pinot Noir (Central Coast); \$25. Shows lots of

Central Coast class, with brisk acidity and pure, fruity flavors of raspberries, cherries, orange zest and cola. The mouthfeel is silky, the acidity crisp, the finish dry. Very nice for drinking now, and a good price for a Pinot Noir of this quality. —S.H.

87 Mercy 2008 Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco); \$30. Shows the crisp, natural acidity of this cool-climate appellation, with ripe flavors of red and black raspberries and red cherries, accented with sweet oak. Very nice, very fine, although it would benefit from extra complexity at this price. But drinks beautifully elegant now. —S.H.

87 Pali 2008 Huntington Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$19. Pretty good wine for the price. Shows lots of Pinot personality, with a silky texture, crisp acids and rewarding flavors of cherries, raspberries, spices and sandalwood. Drink now. —S.H.

87 Talbott 2008 Logan Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$25. Here's a fruit-forward Pinot Noir. It brims in raspberry, cherry and cola flavors, elaborated with the sweet vanillins and caramel of oak barrels, and is brightened with typical Highlands acidity. Seems at its best now. —S.H.

87 Thomas Fogarty 2007 Michaud Vineyard Pinot Noir (Chalone); \$40. Heavy and soft, with cherry and blackberry flavors that could almost be described as Rhône-style. Lacks delicacy and verve, but these mountain-grown wines can be deceptive in youth. Give it 5–6 years in the cellar, and try again. —S.H.

87 Wild Horse 2008 Pinot Noir (Central Coast); \$25. Light and easy, and made for drinking now. Shows plenty of charm, with dry, crisp flavors of herbs, red currants, tobacco and spices, wrapped into scoury tannins. —S.H.

87 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$46. Offers hints of the winery's great vineyard-designates, but seems overpriced for what you get. The wine is dry and crisp and fruity, with cherry, pomegranate, rhubarb, cola and cedar flavors. Drink through the next few years. —S.H.

86 Castle Rock 2008 Reserve Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$18. A nice, everyday Pinot, with a properly silky tex-

ture. The cherry, cola, red licorice and bacon flavors are satisfyingly rich, with elaborate oak overtones. It's a pretty good value in an under-\$20 Pinot Noir. —S.H.

86 Fort Ross 2008 Fort Ross Vineyard Rosé Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$14. Dark for a blush wine, with a crimson hue, and forward and heavy in flavor, too. Shows red cherries, root beer and spices that are accented with brisk acidity, and finish dry. Not very complex or subtle, but easy with all kinds of summer fare. —S.H.

86 Peter Paul Wines 2008 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$32. A fruity-oaky and rather simple Pinot Noir. Offers plenty of upfront cherry-berry and cola fruit, with a kiss of oak, wrapped into a silky texture. —S.H.

86 Senders 2007 Pinot Noir (Carneros); \$35. A bit tough and gritty in texture, with some rugged tannins and a green streak that cuts through the cherry fruit. Will benefit from decanting, but doesn't seem likely to improve with age. —S.H.

86 Thomas Fogarty 2008 Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains); \$29. Too heavy for a Pinot Noir, and lacking in lively mouthfeel, although the cherry and red currant flavors are distinguished. Your best bet is to cellar it and see what happens. —S.H.

86 Williams Selyem 2008 Pinot Noir (Central Coast); \$34. A dry, crisp Pinot Noir with interestingly ripe flavors of cherries, oranges and cola. Maybe a little overpriced for what you get, but it's a pretty wine. —S.H.

SYRAH/SHIRAZ

93 Four Cairn 2008 Syrah (Napa Valley); \$45. A dramatically rich Syrah made along Northern Rhône lines. Dry, full-bodied and tannic, its flavors now are primary and fresh, suggesting summer blackberries, a few of them shriveled into raisins, and the whole sprinkled with cassis and black pepper. Needs time. Better after 2013. *Cellar Selection.* —S.H.

92 Spotted Owl 2007 Alexandria's Cuvée Syrah (Mount Veeder); \$69. This Syrah is hard and tannic now, and it will always be hard and tannic, but it's quite an

impressive wine. So dense and layered, it reveals tiers of complexity with every sip as it airs in the glass. The flavors are of pure, ripe wild blackberries, with currant, coffee and tobacco notes, and sprinkled with crushed black pepper. Drink now–2013. —S.H.

90 La Fenêtre 2008 À Côté Santa Barbara Highlands Vineyard Syrah (Santa Barbara County); \$24. Very rich and voluptuous, with a mouthfeel of pure satin and velvet. Rich and extracted, too, offering a wealth of blackberries, currants, chocolate and pepper. A very tasty wine for drinking soon. —S.H.

90 Roche 2006 Syrah (Carneros); \$26. It's pretty chilly at Roche's Carneros vineyard, and this wine is not one of those superripe Syrahs. It shows a nice array of cherries and berries, but is also very peppery, with a fine note of grilled, charred beef on the bone. It's a complex, pleasing wine for drinking now with upscale fare. —S.H.

86 Crane Brothers 2006 Crane Ranch Vineyard Syrah (Napa Valley); \$36. Rich in berry, cherry, cola, pepper and sandalwood flavors, but a bit off in texture. Feels jagged and angular, with some green tannins. Ready now. —S.H.

CALIFORNIA WHITE WINES

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

90 Alma Rosa 2008 La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Gris (Sta. Rita Hills); \$28. A beautiful Pinot Gris that lifts this variety beyond workhorse into true elegance and style. Braced with brisk acidity and minerals, it features rich flavors of citrus and tropical fruits, wildflowers, honeysuckle flowers, vanilla and cinnamon spice. —S.H.

90 J Vineyards & Winery 2009 Pinot Gris (California); \$15. With no oak or malolactic fermentation, this wine is all pure, savory fruit. Made from a combination of Clarksburg, in the Delta, and Monterey fruit, it combines warm climate ripeness with coastal acidity to produce a crisp wine with intricate lime and spice flavors. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

86 Mirassou 2009 Pinot Grigio (California); \$12. A very nice, super-drinkable Pinot Grigio marked by citrus and wildflower flavors that are heightened with brisk acidity. Could finish a tad drier, but a lovely cocktail sipper at a good price. —S.H.

RIESLING

89 Brass Tacks 2008 Riesling (Monterey); \$15. This would be a wonderful wine even if it cost a little more. As it is, it's a steal. Shows refined apricot, peach, lychee, mineral and floral flavors, finished with brisk, mouthwatering acidity, and an absolutely dry finish. One of the best Riesling values available in California, and a tremendous cocktail wine. Just 600 cases were produced. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Jacella 2009 Riesling (El Dorado County); \$14. Very good price for a Riesling of this quality. It's very dry and high in acidity, cleansing the palate and stimulating it to appreciate rich fare, from liver paté on toast to grilled trout or chicken satay. Or delicious on its own, with fresh citrus, apricot and peach fruit flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

87 Mirassou 2008 Riesling (California); \$12. Off-dry, this is very nearly a dessert wine, but it's crisp and minerally enough to consider as a dry table wine. Shows tart, clean flavors of citrus, peach, apricot and wildflower, with the diesel taste of Riesling. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

90 Joseph Carr 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$16. We need wines like this that are super-dry, ultra-crisp in acidity and sleekly lean. This one's the anti-Chardonnay. It's tightly wound in minerals and citrus fruits, a Sancerre-style wine born to drink with food. Crab salad in lettuce wraps or chicken satay skewers come to mind. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

89 Brassfield 2008 High Serenity Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (High Valley); \$14. A beautifully drinkable Sauvignon Blanc, as Lake County tends to give, and one that Brassfield in particular has excelled at over the last three vintages. The wine is bone dry and racy in acidity, with mouthwatering flavors of lemons,

limes, grapefruits and gooseberries. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

89 Mercy 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Arroyo Seco); \$16. An absolutely lovely Sauvignon Blanc. The fruit is just fine, ranging from lemons and limes to riper kiwis and green melons, and the finish is totally dry. But what really impresses is the natural acidity. It's so bright and brisk, so mouth-cleansing. Entirely unoaked, this is a great restaurant wine. *Editors' Choice.* —S.H.

88 Capture 2009 Les Pionniers Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$36. Very dry and crisp in acidity, this Sauvignon Blanc, which has never seen oak, shows bright fruit flavors of pink grapefruits, oranges, kiwis and pears, with a streak of minerality. It turns a little green and aggressive on the finish. A clean, stimulating wine for drinking now. —S.H.

88 Madrigal 2009 Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Napa Valley); \$25. A very nice and drinkable Sauvignon Blanc with some extra dimensions of elegance. It has a rich, creamy texture that frames exotic flavors of tropical fruits, kiwis and limes. The acidity is brisk and mouth-cleansing, a perfect counterpoint to the richness. —S.H.

88 Quivira 2009 Fig Tree Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$18. Nicely brisk and clean in acidity, this racy wine whisks through and cleanses the palate. Along the way, it leaves bright flavors of lemons, limes, grapefruits, orange blossom and honeysuckle, with a slightly tart touch of gooseberry. A very nice, unoaked wine. —S.H.

87 Enkidu 2008 Kick Ranch Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County); \$25. This is a brisk, clean wine, marked by tart acidity that scours the palate and prepares it for food. The followup flavors are of spicy tropical citrus fruits and green, savory gooseberries. The grapes are from a coolish vineyard near Santa Rosa. —S.H.

87 Mirassou 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$12. Great price for a super-drinkable Sauvignon Blanc. Brilliantly crisp and mouthwateringly clean, it delivers bone-dry flavors of lemons, limes and grapefruits, with a wildflower spiciness. *Best Buy.* —S.H.

86 Beltane Ranch 2009 Estate Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma Valley); \$23.

A nice, rich Sauvignon Blanc for drinking now with lots of different kinds of foods. With some new oak, it has fruity-sweet flavors of limes, Meyer lemons, apricots and lemongrass, with a tang of gooseberry. —S.H.

86 Capture 2009 Tradition Sauvignon Blanc (California); \$30.

A bone-dry, slightly green Sauvignon Blanc, with lemongrass and gooseberry flavors, boosted with vibrant acidity. Feels elegant and sleek, but won't appeal to everyone. The grapes for this unoaked wine came from Sonoma and Lake counties. —S.H.

86 Frog's Leap 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); \$18.

With no oak, this wine's inherent fruit stars, showing citrus, melons and peaches. With crisp acidity, it's clean, brisk and entirely dry, despite relatively low alcohol. But it's strong in those perfumed pyrazines that turn some people off. —S.H.

86 Round Pond 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (Rutherford); \$26.

Nicely dry and very crisp, with mouthwatering acidity that scours the palate and makes it brisk and clean. It's a little too fruity, though, with jammy pineapple, lemon and lime flavors that pall after a few sips. —S.H.

86 Villa San Juliette 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Paso Robles); \$12.

A very nice, likeable and super-drinkable Sauvignon Blanc, at an everyday price. Nicely crisp and just slightly sweet, it shows fruity flavors of citrus and tropical fruits, pears and melons. —S.H.

WASHINGTON SYRAH

96 Rulo 2007 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$20.

Superb fruit highlights this tight, sculpted Syrah. It's extremely dense, with deep and intense raspberry and cassis fruit flavor, augmented with coffee grounds, smoke and iron filings. Complex, detailed, balanced and deep—what more can a wine give you? This is drinking very young and surely needs to be decanted. But already displaying amazing power. —P.G.

95 Rulo 2007 Silo Reserve Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$35.

From the first sniff you are captivated—this incorporates all the many scents and flavors of great Washington Syrah. Start with earth, seaweed, compost; bring in ripe berry fruit, vanilla, tobacco. That is the nose. In the mouth you get perfect fruit—bright, tangy, a mix of berries and cherries and cassis—highlighted with sharp, defining acidity and polished tannins. Young and assertive, this needs more bottle age to show its best. —P.G.

93 Doyenne 2007 Syrah (Yakima Valley); \$40.

Lush, polished and detailed, this is as elegant as any Washington Syrah can be. Intensely fruity with lively raspberries and plums, it layers in details of earth, mushroom, pepper and herb, leading to a perfectly balanced, structured finish. —P.G.

92 Dunham Cellars 2006 Lewis Vineyard Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$75.

Like its companion Cabernet, the Lewis vineyard designate is still quite hard and unyielding when first opened. The dense, complex aromas suggest the power locked up within, and the wine slowly emerges, at first peppery and herbal, yet layered and complex; then showing some silk and satin, with a strong licorice streak. —P.G.

92 Southard 2007 Lawrence Vineyard Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$25.

Smooth, satiny, seductive and deep, this exciting debut from a new winery shows first-class fruit sourcing and winemaking. The berry and cassis fruit flavors are ripe and polished, balanced with firm acids and hints of black olive and black tea in the tannins. Beautifully defined and balanced throughout, this is crafted for aging, but delicious already. —P.G.

92 Walter Dacon 2007 Boushey Vineyard Appanage Syrah (Yakima Valley); \$50.

Also labeled "Artisan's Reserve" (on back label), this sources fruit from what may well be the best Syrah vineyard in the state. The powerful bouquet brings roasted meats, wild herbs, smoke, seaweed, and mountain berry fruit into play. The same mix of earth, herb, fruit and barrel carries on into the mouth. A Syrah lover's Syrah. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.

91 Verve 2006 Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$24.

You have to look closely at the back label to see that this is sourced from the outstanding Boushey Vineyard in Washington's

Yakima Valley. But there is no doubt once you taste the rush of blueberry/blackberry fruit, swathed in smoky meat, bacon fat, dried tobacco and composted earth flavors. Incense aromas weave through, with firm acids holding the wine in focus. —P.G.

91 Walter Dacon 2007 C'est Syrah Belle (Columbia Valley); \$30.

Tight, very dark, smoky and thick, this young wine will benefit from extended breathing time. At first it's quite bright, slightly volatile, explosive; with breathing time it fleshes out and brings in a rich rainbow of fruit, herb and earth flavors. —P.G.

91 Walter Dacon 2007 C'est Syrah Magnifique (Yakima Valley); \$42.

A sort of reserve ("crafted from our finest French oak barrels") this bumps up the amplitude and concentration a notch, and seems to combine the distinctive qualities of the other two C'est Syrahs from Walter Dacon. The fruit includes berries, compote, cherries and plums, there are streaks of pepper and chocolate, and a hint of the garrigue and compost that define the winery's Boushey vineyard bottling. A fine effort. —P.G.

90 Doyenne 2007 Grand Ciel Vineyard Syrah (Red Mountain); \$75.

Immaculately clean and ripe fruit is on display here, a potpourri of mixed berries. High toned aromas bring in accents of wildflowers, honey and vanilla, continuing into a very pretty finish. —P.G.

90 Upland Estates 2007 Syrah (Snipes Mountain); \$28.

Tight and vertical, this is veined with licorice, tobacco and vanilla, threading through the tart, wild mountain berry fruit. Smoke and black tea, with a whiff of barnyard, seep into the finish. Needs extra breathing time. —P.G.

90 Walter Dacon 2007 C'est Syrah Beaux (Columbia Valley); \$38.

A broad streak of vanilla is set against beautifully ripe, tart and polished raspberry and black cherry fruit. This is quite different from the C'est Syrah Belle, which is aged in French oak. Here it's American oak, which brings in the vanilla and a hint of brine (not too much) and lets the fruit really shine. —P.G.

89 Magnificent Wine Company 2007 The Originals Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$22.

Syrah is winemaker Charles

Smith's strongest suit, so it's not surprising that this is the best of The Originals, his Magnificent Wine Company project. Fruit and spice are amped up equally, with whiffs of pepper and cut grass. It lingers in the throat with just a hint of alcohol. —P.G.

88 Dunham Cellars 2007 Three Legged Red Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$17. Deliciously bright and spicy, its cranberry and raspberry fruit is highlighted with pepper and cinnamon. With more breathing time it fleshes out, fills in with pretty pie cherry flavors and some pleasing toastiness. —P.G.

88 Substance 2008 Sy Syrah (Washington); \$15. This is a fine introduction to Washington Syrah, as it shows not only the fruit (raspberry and boysenberry) but also the fragrances (earth, herb) and the nuances (rock, compost) that make these wines so complex and interesting. At this price, you can't beat it. —P.G.

87 Glen Fiona 2006 Basket Press Syrah (Columbia Valley); \$15. The best of Glen Fiona's current releases, this displays cool-climate varietal character, with mountain berry fruit, herb, spice, tar and a streak of licorice. —P.G.

87 Hyatt Vineyards 2006 Syrah (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. This is straight-ahead, dark, smoky Syrah, with a slightly roasted character that enhances the varietal character. Despite its dark hues and assertive nose, it does not fall heavy in the mouth; the acids are lively and the wine almost silky, with flavors more mature than its relatively youthful vintage might suggest. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

MALBEC

91 Saviah 2007 Malbec (Walla Walla); \$30. 100% varietal, fragrant and dark, with a spicy cinnamon/orange tea flavor under the black cherry fruit. This stellar Malbec sports a thick and smoky midpalate, with lots of new oak toastiness. In the mouth a wonderful density, with fine-grained tannins, and good length. —P.G.

90 Substance 2008 Mb Malbec (Washington); \$20. It's hard to find good Washington Malbec under \$20. Start here. Stone Tree (Wahluke Slope) vineyard provided much of the fruit, and there is a small (10%)

amount of new oak in the mix. This captures the steely core of cassis, matches it to sharp, defining acids, and hones the accents of herb and cinnamon spice to a perfect pitch. —P.G.

90 Upland Estates 2007 Malbec (Snipes Mountain); \$28. Pure varietal, this estate-grown Malbec from Snipes Mountain (central Yakima Valley) is deep and fascinating, with luscious plum and berry flavors accented with floral highlights. It moves gracefully across the palate, showing subtle streaks of earth, iron and a tiny whiff of the barnyard. —P.G.

CHARDONNAY

93 Rulo 2008 Sundance Vineyard Chardonnay (Wahluke Slope); \$20. Fragrant and lush with floral/citrus aromas, this stainless-fermented Chardonnay is inviting and seductive. Brilliant, bright fruit anchors a wine that is tense and dense and vividly thrilling. The acids are natural and flavors seamlessly run from lemon/lime to pineapple to orange, and keep on keeping on, with fresh, water-washed rock in the finish. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

91 Rulo 2008 Birch Creek Vineyard Chardonnay (Walla Walla); \$20. This is all Birch Creek vineyard fruit, barrel fermented and put through full malolactic. It's soft, fleshy and buttery, with good ripe light tropical fruit, lots of barrel flavor, and enough acid to support it all. Both Rulo Chardonnays are perfect expressions of their style—one oaked, one unoaked—each in fine balance and proportion. —P.G.

90 Boomtown 2008 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$13. Stainless steel fermented, this pure varietal is bursting with a tasty fruit bowl mix of apple, pineapple, and Meyer lemon. A hint of mint sneaks in, and the acidity brings bracing minerality to the finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

90 Goose Ridge 2008 Estate Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$18. Inviting, fresh, racy scents mix pineapple, citrus and light tropical fruits. There is an interesting mouthfeel not unlike Sémillon, though none is indicated in the blend. The wine has substantial length and unusual highlights of spice, clove and mint, along with plenty of rich, ripe

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fruit to hold down the center palate. Not shy at 14.8% alcohol, this is a fine effort from consulting winemaker Charlie Hoppes. —P.G.

88 Ken Wright 2007 Celilo Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Gorge); \$25. From the old vine planting, this is a thick, chunky, fruity style, with banana and light tropical fruit flavors. Firm acidity and grip give it a substantial mouthfeel. —P.G.

88 Silver Lake 2008 Roza Hills Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay (Rattlesnake Hills); \$12. An exceptional value, this is buttery and round, loaded with peaches and creamy vanilla flavors. Solidly mainstream and quite delicious in a full-on, barrel-fermented, 100% malolactic style. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Eliseo Silva 2007 Areté Vineyards Chardonnay (Columbia Valley); \$10. A very tasty, fruity, slightly sweet style. It's front-loaded and fruit-loaded, but good value and good taste. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Silver Lake 2008 Cask Chardonnay (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. Apple and pear, cracker and citrus, pineapple and a hint of residual sugar combine in a soundly made, all-purpose Chardonnay. The alcohol is just under 13%, and the wine was not put through malolactic fermentation, leaving it crisp and fresh. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

PINOT GRIS/GRIGIO

90 Alexandria Nicole 2009 Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$16. Fragrant, inviting, this lovely Pinot Gris bursts out with fresh cut pear flavors so crisp you want to bite it rather than sip it. Lovely perfumed highlights of clover and sweet blossom add interest. There is just enough phenolic bite to give the finish further definition. —P.G.

90 Hyatt Vineyards 2008 Pinot Gris (Rattlesnake Hills); \$9. Firm and full of fresh pear and apple and white peach fruit flavors. A clever blend that includes Muscat, Viognier and Riesling. Crisp and full-bodied, with a very clean and refreshing mouthfeel that extends into a bright, satisfying finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Ciao Bella 2009 Pinot Grigio (Columbia Valley); \$13. Easy drink-

ing, fresh white wine with grapefruit and pear flavors front and center. There is a pleasing tartness, and a suggestion of balancing fruit sugar that plays well against the acidity. —P.G.

86 Vin du Lac 2008 Grisant! Pinot Gris (Columbia Valley); \$18. The Grisant Pinot Gris is more full and fleshy than the winery's LEHM bottling, but still a bit one dimensional. Pleasant flavors of pear fruit, skin phenolics and light suggestions of cinnamon. —P.G.

RIESLING

93 Pacific Rim 2008 Solstice Vineyard Riesling (Yakima Valley); \$25. Flinty, with dense citrus rind phenolics, and great length. There are subtle traces of honey, lingering threads that suggest everything from apples to papaya. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

92 Pacific Rim 2009 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$11. A classic Washington tasting-room Riesling—only better. Opulent and fruity, with apricots, star anise, mint, a very nice spicy streak that lifts it up, and adds a lot of complexity. Smooth and supple, it coats the palate, captures some floral highlights, even a bit of marshmallow. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

91 Pacific Rim 2008 Wallula Vineyard Biodynamic Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$20. Full-bodied, it leans into stone fruits and light tropical. Tasted a few weeks before its official release, it remained a little sugary, with its relatively high alcohol (and lower acidity) adding to the impression of sweetness. —P.G.

91 Pacific Rim 2009 Organic Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$14. Well-integrated flavors of mixed fruits are augmented with a sneaky streak of caramel, and a slight buttery softness in the finish. Very appealing, with a good long finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

90 Pacific Rim 2008 Dry Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$11. The winery calls this a "trocken" style. It's aromatic with a mouthwatering juiciness (though not too puckery) that invites a second (and third) glass. The alcohol is a moderate 12.5%, making this a perfect summer all-purpose, all-food sipping wine. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

90 Southard 2008 Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$18. Plump and spicy, mixing mint and apple, with flavors running into riper fruits—pear and peach. This fills the mouth with luscious fruit, suggestions of vanilla cream and butterscotch, with just enough acidity to bolster it on through into the finish. It's big and thick for Riesling, yet beautifully balanced and quite delicious. —P.G.

88 Pacific Rim 2009 Sweet Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$11. This wine reaches just 8.5% alcohol, with 7% residual sugar, and plenty of backing acidity. CO2 from fermentation is left in the wine to give it a little soda pop feeling to it. A perfect transition from White Zin for the new wine consumer. Simple, but balanced and pleasurable, with flavors of peach, sugar, Meyer lemon and orange candy. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

88 Silver Lake 2008 Late Harvest Reserve Riesling (Rattlesnake Hills); \$19. This well-made, off-dry late harvest Riesling includes small amounts of Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc. The fruit shines here, and it was indeed picked really late, as the stats indicate: 13% residual sugar and 12% alcohol. As with most Washington late harvest wines, the acidity is there to support all that sugar. —P.G.

87 Avery Lane 2008 Riesling (Washington); \$10. Once you get past the blast of sulfur you find pretty citrus and nectarine fruits, moderate sweetness and balancing acidity, with a lightly candied, honey/lemon finish. Let it breathe! **Best Buy.** —P.G.

87 Vin du Lac 2008 Les Amis Riesling (Columbia Valley); \$14. This is designed like a tasting room table wine, with 18% Muscat and 7% Gewurztraminer included in the blend. It's fresh, fruity, and slightly sweet, with good balance. An all-purpose white wine to sip on the deck or enjoy with takeout Thai food. —P.G.

86 Vin du Lac 2008 LEHM Dry Riesling (Chelan County); \$25. This is very dry, tart, tangy, and lemony, with much of the flavor from skin phenolics and moderate fruit depth. It tastes of lemon rind and grapefruit rind, and shows plenty of acid. —P.G.

86 Washington Hills 2008 Riesling (Washington); \$10. At 2.3% residual sugar, this is nicely balanced between sweet and

dry. The fruit links peach, apricot and pear with a honey in tea streak that carries into the finish. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

ROUSSANNE

92 Doyenne 2008 Roussanne (Red Mountain); \$32. This is a great vintage for this wine, pure Roussanne from Ciel du Cheval vineyard grapes. It opens with high-toned jasmine, lemon and chamomile aromas, lightly touched with honey. Limes, pears and orange marmalade fill the midpalate, opening into a long, lingering finish dotted with white pepper. —P.G.

88 Alexandria Nicole 2009 Destiny Ridge Vineyards Roussanne (Horse Heaven Hills); \$28. Scents of vanilla, peach, and coconut milk lead into well-defined fruit flavors that run from stone fruits to light tropical. There's plenty of acidity, good grip to the palate, and the wine shows heft through the middle. The finish fades gracefully with pleasing minerality. —P.G.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

92 Silver Lake 2008 Late Harvest Reserve Sauvignon Blanc (Rattlesnake Hills); \$19. This low-alcohol (10.4%) dessert wine, finished with 11% residual sugar, is absolutely spot-on. Layers of textural detail amplify the concentrated core of lemon drop and candied orange, and an orange pekoe tea character adds still more flavor interest through the finish. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

92 Upland Estates 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (Snipes Mountain); \$18. Thoroughly delicious. This captures a distinctive side of the grape that blends a sweet grassy herbaceousness with a lively mix of apple, lemon-grass, citrus and orange peel, finished with the slightest suggestion of honey. —P.G.

88 Magnificent Wine Company 2008 Fish House Sauvignon Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$13. Previous Fish House whites were Chardonnay; now it's Sauvignon Blanc, which makes better sense. This doesn't shy away from grassy varietal character; it's bright and herbaceous, clean and green, with plenty of lively acidity and a hint of white pepper. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

86 Vin du Lac 2008 LEHM Sauvignon Blanc (Chelan County); \$20. This shows the sharper, more herbaceous side of the grape, though perhaps without being fully ripe. It seems to fall away quickly into simple lemon juice flavors, with a hint of herb. —P.G.

VIOGNIER

92 Rulo 2008 Viognier (Walla Walla); \$16. Showing a zesty mix of lime, citrus rind and rock in the mouth, it's dense and still a bit hard, but deep. A rich, textural, serious Viognier, there's plenty of fruit and depth for near-term drinking, but it gives the definite impression that it needs more bottle age to fully blossom. **Editors' Choice.** —P.G.

88 Southard 2008 Elephant Mountain Vineyard Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$20. A serviceable white, with light lemony fruit—apple and jicama. It does not have the power of some riper Viogniers, but it is persistent, well-crafted, does not try to overdo it, and would be a perfectly fine accompaniment to a wide range of poultry and seafood dishes. The finish is surprisingly long and nicely detailed. —P.G.

87 Vin du Lac 2008 Vie! Viognier (Columbia Valley); \$18. A good effort, with clean varietal character: lemon/lime skin flavors, sharp acidity and cool, green fruit throughout. —P.G.

WHITE BLENDS

94 DeLille Cellars 2008 Chaleur Estate Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$34. DeLille's take on a first-growth Bordeaux Blanc really shines in this excellent vintage. Toasty and firm, it captures the lushness of the Sémillon fruit while mixing in bright citrus. The barrel aging adds warm brioche, toasted almond and caramel. There is just a tiny suggestion of honey in the finish, a rush of tropical fruits. —P.G.

91 Brian Carter Cellars 2007 Oriana White (Columbia Valley); \$24. Oriana blends Roussanne, Viognier and Riesling to good effect. This nicely evolved 2007 has a bouquet of lemon oil, citrus and hints of white blossom. The citrus flavors continue, buttressed by a

strong mineral streak. It's drinking beautifully right now. —P.G.

90 Brian Carter Cellars 2008 Oriana White (Columbia Valley); \$24. In this newest vintage of Oriana, the Riesling component has been bumped up to 18%; the rest is half Viognier, 31% Roussanne. The three grapes complement each other well; the Riesling adding aromatics, acidity and a barely perceptible amount of residual sugar. This opens with a vitamin pill aroma that slowly dissipates; the fruit flavors are a mix of pineapple and Satsuma orange, with lots of natural acidity. —P.G.

90 Doyenne 2008 Métier Blanc (Columbia Valley); \$32. Lovely lemon drop and tangerine fruit creates a juicy, vibrant mouthfeel, with a baby aspirin/orange candy streak running down the midpalate. Tasted just after being released, this looks likely to improve over the next year or two. —P.G.

90 Sleight of Hand 2008 The Magician (Columbia Valley); \$17. This juicy blend of Gewürztraminer and Riesling sports a lush mix of melon, citrus, orange peel and grapefruit, with spicy highlights. —P.G.

88 Domaine Pouillon 2008 Deux (Columbia Valley); \$18. Spicy and forward, with penetrating aromas of citrus oil, rind and beeswax. It just borders on volatile, but that also highlights the lemony, pineapple-flavored fruit. Sharp and assertive, this is a wine that will profit from a richly sauced fish or pasta accompaniment. —P.G.

88 Domaine Pouillon 2008 Blanc du Moulin (Horse Heaven Hills); \$17. The Roussanne really shines in the blend, offering rich, ripe, soft, seductive aromas of peaches and apricots, then folding into a broad midpalate with no rough edges. There is a definite peaches-and-cream feel to the midpalate, and that creamy flavor and texture runs right through a gentle finish. —P.G.

88 Magnificent Wine Company 2008 House Wine (Columbia Valley); \$13. This tart and aromatic white blend could be labeled Chardonnay; less than a quarter is a mix of Riesling, Muscat, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris. It's detailed and lively, with bright citrus, pineapple, pink grapefruit and sweet spice. **Best Buy.** —P.G.

Beer

AROUND THE WORLD WITH PILSNER

Some beers are inherently associated with a specific place or country. Pilsners (or pilseners or pils for short) are an example of the opposite—they do not necessarily evoke one region but more represent an overall style. The product will vary depending on where it comes from, but the name pilsner is used all over the world.

Take the Czech or Bohemian pilsener, for starters. Born in the 19th century city of Plzen in the Czech Republic (or Pilsen in Bohemia), they are a pale lager, light straw to golden in color with a crystal-clear appearance. One of the defining characteristics of these brews is the use of the noble Saaz hop, which can produce a lovely spicy bitterness, flavor and/or aroma.

There are also German pilsners, one of the more popular of the country's styles.

These brews are very similar to the Czech pil-

seners but can use a wider variety of hops including Hallertauer, Hallertauer Mittelfrüh, Tettnanger, Styrian Goldings, Spalt, Perle and Hersbrucker in addition to Saaz. They also typically show more hop characteristics than their Bohemian cousins.

Lastly we have American pilsners. The style has its roots in pre-Prohibition America when German immigrants came to America with their time-honored recipes, but has today evolved to please the contemporary beer-drinking demographic or mimic more traditional German or Bohemian pilseners. They are light- to medium-weight with moderate malt aromas and flavors and typically higher alcohol than their European counterparts.

Overall, though, pils are known for their lighter color and alcohol and immense drinkability. Great on a warm day and with most food, they're an easy choice to finish out the last days of summer.

Prost!

—LAUREN BUZZEO

94 Victory Prima Pils (German Pilsener; Victory Brewing Company, VT); 5.3% abv, \$10/6 pack. One of America's most cherished and sought-after pilsners, this is a terrific example of an American pils that's sure to please any lover of the style. The hops are big and floral on the nose, with more biscuity malt in the mouth playing alongside the notes of fresh citrus. Full and creamy with moderate carbonation and low alcohol, a soft bitterness follows through the long finish and closes on a sweet hop oil note. An excellent companion to food, though certainly enjoyable all on its own as well.

91 Southampton Keller Pils (Keller Bier; Southampton Publick House, NY); 5.0% abv, \$9/6 pack. This is a new addition to the Southampton lineup that will focus on a single hop variety each release in order to showcase that hop's specific aroma and flavor profiles. This year's hop is the Hallertauer Tradition, a refined hop with delicate aromatics and a fairly assertive flavor profile. Light grassy aromas in the bouquet are supported by fresh sweet citrus, dried wheat and floral hop notes. The mouth is medium weight with a good amount of hop presence as well as cracker, earthy spice and resin notes. The astringent bitter kick leads all the way through the long finish, slowly dissipating. Nice character and complexity for a pils.

90 Trumer Pils (German Pilsener; Trumer Brauerei Berkeley, CA); 4.8% abv, \$9/6 pack. Pours a brilliant golden straw color with a medium head that leaves a little lacing behind. The bouquet offers notes of grass, dried hops and a slight metallic skunkiness. Medium weight and creamy in the mouth with a good amount of sweet malty flavors along with nice notes of peppery spice and orange citrus. The carbonation is assertive but seemingly fine-grained, and the finish closes dry and remarkably clean, leaving you ready for more.

89 Žatec Bright Lager Beer (Bohemian-Style Pilsener; Žatec Brewery, Czech Republic); 4.6% abv, \$4/500 ml. With Žatec being the famous Saaz hop growing region and the label including stickers of the hops and the Protected Designation of Origin seal, one would expect to experience the best the hop has to offer here. It pours light golden in color with a medium white frothy head. The aromas are sweeter than one might expect; apricot notes mingle with hop oils and caramel malt notes. The flavors are also quite intense for a pilsener, with a lot of bready, fresh yeast notes along with elegant and well-integrated Saaz hop notes that offer a plethora of character and complexity: spicy, earthy, floral and bitter all at once. A great drinking experience.

88 Pinkus Organic Ur Pils (German Pilsener; Brauerei Pinkus Müller, Germany); 5.2% abv, \$4/500 ml. A USDA Certified Organic beer, with a sticker on the bottle confirming such. Slightly hazy pale yellow color in the glass with a dense white head. Hay and tart lemony citrus lead the way on the nose with an underlying bready note supporting it. The mouth is brisk and tart, with lemon pepper, earthy yeast and herbal hop notes. Soft carbonation and a round, medium-heavy mouthfeel, this feels a bit fuller-bodied than most German Pilseners out there. The finish has good length and closes on a softly bitter note.

88 Paulaner Premium Pils Extra Dry (German Pilsener; Paulaner Brauerei, Germany); 4.9% abv, \$9/6 pack. Clear golden color with a decent head that leaves a nice rim throughout. The carbonation is very visible with air bubbles dancing upward all

THE WINE ENTHUSIAST BEER BUYING GUIDE

The Beer Buying Guide is a summary of recent detailed evaluations and product ratings of a single reviewer, Assistant Tasting Director Lauren Buzzeo. Every tasting note is accompanied by a rating. Also noted are the full name of the product, beer style, alcoholic strength expressed as percent alcohol by volume, producer's name, and the suggested/average U.S. retail price. If price cannot be confirmed, an \$NA (not available) will be printed. Prices are for the bottle size or packaging indicated.

ABOUT THE SCORES

The numerical ratings correspond to quality in the following manner:

- Classic 98–100:** The pinnacle of quality.
- Superb 94–97:** A great achievement.
- Excellent 90–93:** Highly recommended.
- Very Good 87–89:** Often good value; well recommended.
- Good 83–86:** Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
- Acceptable 80–82:** Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

SUBMITTING BEERS FOR REVIEW

Beers should be submitted to Wine Enthusiast's headquarters at 333 North Bedford Road, Mt. Kisco, NY 10549. Inquiries and submissions should be addressed to Lauren Buzzeo at lbuzzeo@wineenthusiast.net. **There is no charge for submitting beers**, and *Wine Enthusiast* will make every effort to sample all beers submitted for review. There is, however, no guarantee that all submissions will be tasted, or that reviews will appear in the magazine. It is recommended that two bottles of each submission be sent; please include all pertinent information including suggested retail price, producer name and contact information.

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throughout the glass. Grains and fresh grass dominate the nose, with soft, fresh hop florals in the background. The mouth offers some biscuity sweetness alongside the delicate presence of noble hop bitters. Overall, a well-balanced brew that's clean, refreshing and very easy to drink. Restrained but tasty; definitely a good session beer.

87 Napa Smith Pilsner (Bohemian-Style Pilsener; Napa Smith Brewery, CA); 5.0% abv, \$4/22 oz. This brew pours a little hazy with a pale straw color. The aromas are rather tart with vibrant citrus acidity, barely ripe pear, green apple, grassy hop notes and a touch of lavender. The flavors are a little lighter in intensity than anticipated, but overall the beer is very crisp and lively with a sweet softly toasted malt backbone and secondary flavors of peanut skins, chamomile tea and nectarine pit. Different, with a lot of things going on, but flavorful and drinkable nonetheless. **WE**

CORRECTION

In June's "Top 10 Wines Under \$10," the wrong importer was listed for Rivarey 2006 Crianza (Rioja). The correct importer is International Wine Imports.

Also in the June issue, in the Buying Guide, the wrong importer was listed with the 2008 Raimat Albariño. The wine is imported by Aveniu Brands.

In the September Issue of Wine Enthusiast Magazine

- Italy's Barbera and Dolcetto
- Top Sauvignon Blancs of California
- South Australia's Back Road Wineries
- Eastern Europe Beverage-centric Adventures
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HERE'S TO TOAST!

ONE FACTOR THAT RAISES WINEMAKING TO AN ART FORM? THOSE PESKY BARRELS.

BY BRIAN HEARD



Heat has always been essential to the building of a barrel. A barrel is formed over a fire, staves splayed like a skirt, with one hoop as its waistband and two more above and below to secure the structure. Heat coaxes oak's rigid fibres (*ligins*) to relax. The staves are repeatedly wetted, but the barrel's interior inevitably begins to toast, and this toasting inevitably has great influence upon the eventual contents. Wine, for example.

The fire-bent barrel has been the norm for about two millennia, but contemporary innovators, spurred by the importance of toast, are trying to replace flames with novel tools. Convection systems are one example: computer-controlled blasts of scorching air, precisely programmed at exactly repeatable intensities. To understand the lure of computerized control, let's have a glance at the complications of toast.

Toast as bulwark. Toast provides a buffer between wood and wine, limiting the leaching of oak's soluble parts into the liquid. This is especially important for wood tannins (characteristically astringent) and lactones (which smell of coconut or freshly sawn lumber). Toast as bulwark explains why a well-toasted barrel is a subtler instrument than a lightly toasted one. A light (even thin) red wine will be put into darkly toasted barrels; only a powerful wine can cope with gently toasted oak.

Beyond levels (vaguely termed light, medium, heavy), depth is important. Remember campfire marshmallows? A rashly rapid crisping was fun, but the result made an inferior s'more...so too with barrels. In both cases, you want a careful, deeply penetrating toasting.

Toast as flavor compound juggler. Over 200 flavor-active compounds can transfer ("leach" is such an ugly word) from oak to wine. Toasting sends the potency of each on

a different arc. Just two examples: Eugenol (familiar from the smell of cloves) is present in raw oak; during toasting it first decreases, then rises until plummeting at toast's darker end. Furfural (which smells like butterscotch and almonds) surges as toasting begins, but declines as it continues.

Once a barrel is put into use, complexities heap onto complications.

Toast-derived character lasts only a few years, but no two compounds deplete in unison. Further, what is extracted may be altered, muted or exaggerated by the components of a developing wine (yeast, bacteria, alcohols, acids). A single example: yeast can twist almond-like furfural into new compounds which smell like smoked meat and leather.

Toast as wild card. Obviously, toasting toward particular effects is no simple task. Now consider the physical challenge of coopering: part wrestling, part ballet. First, the heat source: a small pit (brazier) in the floor containing a fire of oak-chips burns at an inconsistent temperature. Second, a barrel's inner surface is always at unequal distances from the fire. Third, wood from different trees (or even parts of the same tree) varies enough that staves toast at different rates.

In light of such hitches, the fire-bent barrel can seem like a problem: an impossibly inconsistent tool. Enter computer controlled convection systems.

But maybe inconsistency—reined in by a skilful cooper—is actually tradition's asset. Variation from barrel to barrel can be smoothed out, as they have always been: by tasting, selecting and blending from a cellar full of barrels. Overwhelming and even impossible complexities—toast one among many—are what elevate winemaking to an artful craft, not a manufacturing process. ■

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